





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

Acquired by the University of California
AT LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

A Y E S H A,
THE MAID OF KARS.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "ZOHRAH," "HAJJI BABA," &c.

Il y a plaisir d'être dans un vaisseau battu de l'orage lorsqu'on est sûr
qu'il ne périra point.—*Pensees de Blaise Pascal.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

(SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.)

1834.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

AYESHA,
THE MAID OF KARS.

CHAPTER I.

Thenne Florence rav'd as anie madde,
And dydd her tresses tere ;
O staie mye husbande, lorde, and lyfe !
Syr Charles thenne dropt a teare.

CHATTERTON.

THE raging of the battle had assumed so loud and threatening a character, that its clang and uproar roused Osmond from the train of thought into which Ayesha's note had thrown him, and brought him to the window. Stasso stood there likewise, and, pointing out Hassan, related what had so recently taken place between them. Osmond was musing

VOL. II.

B

on this circumstance, and a ray of hope dawned on his mind that through Hassan's means some mode of escape might be devised, when Stasso, with a look of despair, shrugging up his shoulders, said, "He is a devil — all Kûrds are devils ! I have watched him ever since he left me, and he seems to have heeded my words no more than the wind."

Mustafa, who had lent his ear to what Stasso had said, was too happy to put in his word of invective against Hassan and his countrymen, and said, "If you trust in that bit of villany, you will only find how well he can laugh at our beards. They come all from one dung-hill : May their mothers — may their fathers, be bought and sold ! If you want a dog, look at him for the first dog in Roum."

The battle was raging ; the first pistol-shot having been fired, a burst of shouts came from the Kûrds, a roar of execration rang through the Turkish band ; the confusion and uproar was at its height, when a pushing and vibra-

tion were observed by Stasso at the door of the prison, followed by an attempt upon the lock. He hastened to the spot, when he heard the words, "*Atch!*—open! *vour!*—strike, break!" spoken in a low and most cautious tone: "I am a friend — I come from Hassan. Horses are ready, break down the door, and you are free!"

These words acted like magic upon the three prisoners: a thrill of delight ran through the whole frame of Osmond; Stasso instantly lent his whole strength to the work, and Mustafa stood by in silence, apprehensive of treachery. The door of the prison opposed but a slight obstacle to the strength and ability of so many. The friendly hand thrust a stone under the door, and Stasso, having immediately seized it, began to batter away at the rude lock, heedless of noise — for what noise could be heard in the clamorous din that was going on around them? Osmond discovered a bar in a dark corner of the prison, and using

it as a lever under the door, soon found it most efficacious in forcing it off its simply-formed hinges. The expulsion of the door was the work but of a few minutes. When it began to fall, the prisoners were curious to see who might be their deliverer, when, to their surprise, they found, not Hassan as they had expected, but a stranger, a Kûrd in dress, who said little, but showed how much he was in earnest by furthering the work of demolition to the utmost of his power. At length, having secured an egress, Osmond cast his eyes around his prison by way of bidding it adieu, and looking out of the grated-window for the last time, there, to his surprise, he saw Hassan still in the thickest of the fight, dealing out his blows like another Rustam, and apparently totally heedless of his, Osmond's fate. At first, he also suspected treachery, but, when he recollected that none but a friend could have effected this first step towards an escape, he boldly followed the Kûrd, accompanied by Stasso and Mustafa.

The mysterious guide glided down the narrow lane into which the door of the prison opened, at the farther end of which stood four horses, which, by their heated appearance, evinced that they had recently been in active service: he himself mounted one, and desired Osmond and his attendants to mount the others. This they did without a minute's delay, and, the guide leading the way, they wound through the streets with haste tempered by caution, which indeed might without much fear have been neglected, seeing that the streets were entirely deserted; for such of the inhabitants as had remained behind to watch the houses and shops had abandoned them to learn the reason of the increasing fury of the fray.

They easily made good their escape from the city. This being achieved, the guide immediately struck into a path leading to the nearest mountains, and having reached a small ruined building, the remains of one of those many Armenian churches so frequently seen

about this part of Asia, he there told them they must await the arrival of Hassan Aga, his chief. They dismounted, and the guide tying the horses' nose-bags to their heads, (for these they always carry with them,) allowed them to feed. To the faithful Stasso, however, it occurred that this delay might be turned to a better account; for, having perceived how little danger of detection there was in passing through the city, he proposed to his master that he should return, make for the dyer's house, and redeem the arms which they had therein secreted, and which were now become articles of the first necessity; whilst at the same time he might easily carry away such other effects as were necessary for his dress and comfort. To this Osmond slowly assented, and no sooner was it proposed than put in practice. Stasso, having mounted his horse, took his departure, but he had scarcely proceeded an hundred yards ere he heard his master's voice calling upon him to return.

Ever since Osmond had received in the prison the note from Ayesha, he had been impelled by a violent longing to see her before bidding her adieu, perhaps, for ever. Seeing his servant depart to seek the very spot where she lived, produced a desire to accompany him stronger than any consideration of prudence; and he forthwith determined so to do. Mustafa and the guide, hearing him call for his horse, interposed themselves, and would almost have used violence to prevent this evidently rash act, but, finding him resolved, all they could do was to entreat him to return without the smallest delay, seeing that Hassan might join them at any moment, and that the safety of all depended upon a speedy flight from Kars and its neighbourhood.

Osmond and Stasso soon found themselves at the gate of the dyer's house. The good Armenians stood all aghast when they saw them enter. Bogos had carefully refrained from

being present at the morning's exhibition, having learned from experience how dangerous it was for Christians to show themselves when there was a chance of a conflict between Mahomedans; and now that the conflict had actually taken place, he still more carefully kept at home. Having upon their arrival ascertained who his guests were, he allowed them to enter, and secured their horses in the court of his house. He would have overwhelmed them with attentions, but they desired him to desist, for that they were on a business of life and death. Stasso immediately flew to the well-known spot where he should find his master's arms and effects, whilst Osmond ascended the terrace. As the latter scaled the steps which led to it, his heart almost leaped into his mouth from excess of agitation. He paused ere he ventured upon the last step, and then looked around him—he heard the noise of the conflict still going on in the direction of the Pasha's palace. Every thing on the terrace

remained as he had left it. The loveliness of Ayesha upon her first appearance on that very spot came strongly to his recollection. He advanced some steps towards the opening of Suleiman's terrace: the first object that caught his eye was a praying-carpet, which seemed to have been spread preparatory to devotion, and from this he concluded that Ayesha might soon appear. After the miseries which he had undergone, he could scarcely believe that he was so near the enjoyment of happiness. He saw traces of Ayesha in many things which lay around; she had evidently been passing some of her time on that spot. There was a cushion near which she had been seated; the temporary veil, or large covering which Mahomedan women throw over their heads when they look from the terrace, rested upon it; near it was a cambric handkerchief. Osmond took up the handkerchief: it appeared to him that this was not an article of dress usual to Turkish women, that it was evidently a European's handker-

chief—he knew enough of women’s work to be certain that the sewing had never been executed by Turkish hands: he inspected the corners, and to his surprise saw in one of them the remains of a European mark—the letters were almost obliterated, but it was plain that there had been letters:—he was lost in conjecture. But a few minutes had passed in this occupation, when he heard voices at the foot of the stairs leading to Suleiman Aga’s terrace, then the rustling of clothes, and at length some light steps ascending. What was his ecstasy—his overpowering delight—the next moment to see his beloved! She uttered a shriek at seeing him—a deadly paleness came over her—she tottered, and was only supported by his arm. What pen can describe, or what words can sufficiently give an idea of their mutual sensations! In a few words he told her how he had been released, and how he had succeeded in getting thus far. It would be impossible to describe the look

of love and interest, mingled with apprehension, which beamed upon the features of the maiden as she turned her eyes towards her lover—it was the perfection of beauty, for Osmond at the moment thought that nothing human was ever like it. But the endearing confidence which his presence inspired, was the moment after broken and blasted by the fear and apprehension of discovery:—at one moment she would cling to him with rapture, at another retreat from him with the chilling apprehension that the demonstrations of her love were but so many steps which might lead to his destruction. Instead of appearing to enjoy his presence, she only seemed anxious to see him depart. Every moment, she felt, was pregnant with danger—she looked around with alarm to see if any one was espying her actions—she drew her lover with precipitation behind a projection, lest they might again be seen from the adjacent minaret, that offspring of all their miseries! It appeared to

her that the air was studded with eyes, beaming their full glare upon her—there was no concealment at hand. Osmond did all in his power to control her fears—he entreated her to hear him with composure. As he pressed her to his heart, he poured out the assurance of his ardent love—he did not know what futurity might have in store for him, but this he knew, that he was determined to live only in the hope of one day possessing her. He disclosed to her his conviction that there was some mystery in her present situation, which had given rise in his mind to doubts almost amounting to conviction that she was not the daughter of Suleiman and Zabetta; and he assured her of his determination, if he lived, to endeavour to clear them up. He alluded to the handkerchief which he had just seen, to the locket and the coin which he had before observed. He entreated her to reflect deeply upon all their past conversations, — perhaps she might hear what he had advanced in the assembly which had been

convoked to oppose him. He entreated her to live in the certainty that he would never abandon her—adding, that he was obliged to leave her now in order to secure both from the death which otherwise would certainly be inflicted upon them, but that many events might interfere to bring them together again, and therefore he again conjured her to live in hope.

Ayesha lent the most anxious ear to all he said, although at the same time her whole being seemed to be abroad to watch against danger. They were interrupted by the hasty footsteps of Stasso, who, rushing up to the terrace with the arms of his master, would have dragged him away at once, so full of apprehension was he lest any further delay might be the cause of their destruction. Osmond having thrust his pistols into his girdle, and strapped on his sabre to his side, assured him that he would instantly follow, and ordered him to go and prepare the horses. Stasso retreated, shaking his head, and doubting his master's

words. Osmond then returned to Ayesha, who, in her turn, opened her whole heart to him ; told him of her grief—of her fears for his safety ; assured him that she would adhere to every word of advice which he had given her ; that she would live in the hope of being his ; and that, if constancy were ever to be found in the breast of woman, it should be in hers. Lovers' vows are perhaps the same in all parts of the world ; therefore, it will be needless to describe more of those which were mutually repeated on this occasion, excepting to remind the reader of the extraordinary circumstances under which they were made.

The hitherto undisturbed continuation of their interview produced confidence, and they both began to lay by part of their fears, when, providentially, they were brought to a sense of their situation by hearing the rattling steps of a horse approach along the paved street at full gallop, followed at a distance by the steps of other horses at the same speed, accompanied

by shouts and occasional pistol-shots. Osmond immediately thrust his head over the parapet of the terrace, and to his dismay he recognized in the approaching horseman the brilliantly-dressed figure of Hassan, the Surugi, urging his horse on to the utmost of his speed, and at a distance perceived several of the Pasha's guard equally impelling their horses in pursuit. At one glance he saw the state of the case, and aware of the imprudence of further delaying his departure, he was obliged to screw up his courage to leave Ayesha. She saw the necessity more vividly than he could do. She would have gone with him; her whole existence seemed to become as a thing of nought, now that she was to be deprived of him in whom her own being was identified, but, the dangers with which he was about to be assailed bursting at once upon her imagination, she threw herself upon his breast and wept aloud, whilst at the same time she impelled him gently towards the descent of the Armenian's terrace. Osmond was

turning in his mind what he could leave with her as a token of his love ; the only thing which he could give her at the moment was a Turkish ring, with his own name, Osman, (after the Oriental mode of pronouncing it,) engraved upon it, and from this he entreated her never to part, but to deliver it to him when it should please Heaven to bring them together again. A shot fired close under the walls of the terrace reminded him again how necessary it was to depart, and, with one sudden wrench, he darted away from his drooping mistress.

He hastened down the stairs, received the benedictions of his host on his passage, threw himself on his horse, and, with Stasso following, dashed boldly into the street. He found himself at once in the centre of a band of the Pasha's horsemen who were in full pursuit of Hassan :—dressed like them, he was not noticed, but passed for one of the pursuers. Casting one longing look upwards, he caught the form of his Ayesha, who was

straining all her eyes to see the last of all that she held most dear, and, having received from her a sign of recognition, he pressed the flanks of his steed, and made equal way with the band amongst whose ranks he rode. They soon cleared the streets of the town, crowded through the narrow gate, and then, sword in hand, made for the bridge. At a short distance he perceived the flying Hassan making head against his pursuers, although he remarked with dismay that three of them rode horses whose speed was as great as his own, and who seemed likely to come up with him.

Having got into a more open space, and his horse being less worn than either those of the pursued or the pursuers, he urged him forward with redoubled impetus; and as he bounded over every impediment, he came up with the three Turks, who were preparing to seize or destroy their victim. Their words were full of exultation; fierceness and determination were depicted in their features. “*Kelb,*

dur! — dog, stay!” roared one. “*Anna sena baba sena!* — I will destroy his father and mother!” cried out another. “*Pezevenk!* — wretch!” exclaimed the third. The one with whom he first came up was just taking a long aim with his carbine at Hassan, rising on his short stirrups and leaning over his saddle-bow, when Osmond, with a blow of his arm, knocked the weapon from his hand, which instantly delayed his career. The second horseman, who had his hand extended with a pistol, intending also to discharge it at Hassan, seeing what had happened to his comrade, and recognising Osmond at the same instant, fired at him; the ball passed through his turban without touching his head. This immediately brought the attention of the headmost man upon Osmond, and, sword in hand, he reined in his horse, in order to discharge the whole force of his arm upon him as he should pass; but our hero, who now saw that he had but one effort more to make and he was safe, with

great dexterity parried the blow aimed at him, and with still greater, extended his arm, and succeeded in cutting the bridle-rein of his antagonist in two, thus leaving him to the mercy of his horse, who soon bolted out of the road, and carried him away more in a line with his own stable than with Hassan's route.

Thus, having got clear of his enemies, and delighted to find that Stasso was close upon him untouched, his next object was to make himself recognized by Hassan, who was evidently making every preparation to receive his pursuers with a gallantry equal to any part of his day's exploits. "Hassan Aga!" roared out Stasso. "Hassan Aga!" exclaimed Osmond. — "Stop, in God's name!" cried one. — "It is the Frank; the Turks are gone!" vociferated the other. Nothing would do; Hassan rode on, heedless of every thing. He occasionally looked behind him, but only saw Turks in his rear, and therefore, per-

ceiving no change, he still rode on. At length, Stasso calling up his loudest voice from the depths of his lungs, roared out, "Hassan Surugi, stop!" This appeal struck Hassan at once. He had flattered himself that no one could have recognised him as a Surugi, and therefore the circumstance of being called such, brought his attention to a closer scrutiny of his pursuers; and as soon as he discovered who they were, for they had now approached very close, the gloom of his countenance was dispelled, and joy broke out upon it in a manner seldom seen upon an Asiatic face.

Having got clear of his Turkish pursuers, who had perceived how useless would have been any further efforts, Hassan gradually drew in his horse's rein, and allowed Osmond and Stasso to come up with him. When he found that it was to his former deliverer from danger that he was again indebted for life, and particularly when, look-

ing at the shot through his turban, he saw how nearly his own had been sacrificed, he would have dismounted from his horse to kiss his skirt; but Osmond would not allow of any acknowledgments, seeing that he owed his liberty entirely to Hassan's exertions. Indeed, this was no time for unnecessary delay; they might again be pursued by the Pasha's horse; their jaded horses might be overtaken by fresh ones, and it behoved them not to lose a moment in leaving Kars at as great a distance behind them as possible before the shades of night came on. Taking the direction of the spot where Mustafa and the guide lay in wait, they soon added them to their party, and then, keeping their horses at the best speed they could, they struck across the plain in an easterly direction, through paths well known to Hassan and his comrade. Little was said, for the attention of the whole party was taken up in looking constantly around them, so apprehensive were they still that their steps

might be traced. They were yet in the country under the Pasha's control, and therefore thought it right to keep clear of all habitations; and it was only when night had closed in upon them, that Hassan thought he might with safety despatch his comrade to a village, in order to provide corn for their horses, as well as provisions for themselves. They waited at a convenient distance until this had been successfully performed, and then struck into a more uninhabited tract; they sought a sequestered spot, a cavern on the side of an arid slope, well known to Kurdish freebooters, and there they determined to pass the night. Having reached it, they at length dismounted from their jaded horses, and each, after their respective creeds, offering thanks to Heaven for their deliverance, they proceeded to settle themselves for the night. Hassan and his comrade took charge of the horses, which they picketed close to them; and replenishing their

nose-bags with corn, the poor brutes soon forgot their fatigue in the enjoyment of their food. Stasso soon made a fire, and by means of stakes, cut in a neighbouring thicket, he managed to make a spit wherewith to roast a piece of kid, which, with sundry flaps* of bread, formed the evening's meal. Mustafa took the concoction of the coffee under his superintendence; whilst Osmond, extended upon a horsecloth, endeavoured to collect his thoughts, and to come to some conclusions upon the best course which he ought to pursue in the present posture of his affairs. The image of his Ayesha was interwoven with every scheme which he ventured to form; and when he turned his mind to his relations and friends in England, he sighed as he thought how great was the distance between them, and how many events must intervene ere he could hope to find him-

* Bread in this part of Asia, and throughout Persia, is rolled out into flattened portions, like large pancakes.

self restored to them in safety. As for his more immediate schemes, he had not hitherto ascertained from Hassan whither it was his intention to conduct them; but he was determined to allow himself to be guided by him; for he felt that not to place confidence in a man who had done so much for him, would be at once base and unwise.

Stasso having announced that the kid was sufficiently roasted to be eaten, Osmond called all the party together around him, and having seated them in a circle, the meat was placed in the midst upon a flap of bread, and few words were said ere the whole had disappeared by the vigorous application of fingers and jaws. Water from a neighbouring rivulet washed down the coarse materials which their voracious appetites (Osmond's at least) alone made them devour; and when Mustafa had produced his coffee, and they were all seated around, each with a refreshing and consolatory pipe in his mouth, they had entirely

forgotten the dangers and fatigues of the day in the present enjoyment.

Osmond, being anxious to ascertain whither it was Hassan's intention to conduct them, and also to discover who he was, since his present splendid appearance seemed incompatible with his former humble avocation of Surugi, requested him to give some account of himself, premising the question by making him sincere professions of gratitude for having thus saved him from the violence of the Turkish authorities of Kars.

Hassan was a wary fellow, and would never have consented to commit himself by the avowal which Osmond required, had not all concealment been now useless; he therefore agreed to his request, and began as follows:—

“I am your slave—I am nothing—whatever you will order me to be, that I am. You saw me first as a guide, and a driver of baggage-horses; I am, however, no Surugi—I am Cara Bey's principal officer, that's what in truth I am. I

am his *kiayah*, his deputy—I sit in his place when he is absent—he reposes much confidence in me. Sometimes I appear as a Surugi, when it is necessary to acquire intelligence of what passes on the road, of who comes and who goes; and as such I appeared to you. At the time during which you were travelling, when, by the blessing of Allah! you saved my life, my master was lying in wait for a caravan that was to pass into Persia. On the road we met two of his horsemen, sent to ascertain who you were; I ordered them to return, and we passed unmolested—this is the history of that transaction. I have not appeared at Kars, where I am not known as a Surugi, since that time—but the news of the Pasha's projected jerid party having reached us, I asked Cara Bey's leave to attend it—in the first place, because I am devotedly fond of the game, and in the next, because I had received an insult from one of the Pasha's officers, which I longed to revenge, and I hoped that I should on this

occasion find a fitting opportunity for that purpose. I was permitted to go—I bestrode my best horse, one of the finest in the Kurdistan—six of my own men attended me, and on the appointed day we appeared in the field, opposed, with other agas, to the Pasha’s horsemen. I perceived my enemy, and I determined, ere the day’s sports were ended, to revenge myself upon him, either by fair means or foul. The moment I discovered your situation through the means of the Boshnak,” pointing to Stasso as he spoke, “my plan was laid. I determined to return the Pasha’s attacks upon me, and I knew that this would lead to a serious affray, during the noise and confusion of which you might escape. Kûrds and Turks mutually hate each other, and the least spark is always sure to kindle the fire of their passions into a flame. I told him,” pointing to his comrade, “to dismount three of our men, to appropriate their horses to your use, and to release you from prison: all of which I knew he could per-

form, for he had done the same service to myself some years ago. I then returned the Pasha's attack upon me, by discharging a jerid at him with all my best violence : this made him angry, he rallied his men and made a charge upon us. My enemy was the first who fell ; he received my pistol-ball in his head, and shrieked out my name as he writhed with pain. I urged on the engagement to the utmost in my power, for I hoped that, during the noise and excitement which it would produce, you would be able to effect your escape. You know the rest : but for you I must have fallen a prey to the three Turks who so closely pursued me. And now, O Agam ! O my master ! what more can I say ?”

Osmond made all appropriate acknowledgments of the gratitude which in reality he felt, and expressed his admiration at the ingenuity and presence of mind which Hassan had displayed. Even Mustafa could not refrain from exclaiming “ Mashallah !” and finding

himself safe in his person, secure from immediate molestation, and, moreover, with a cup of coffee in his hand and a pipe in his mouth, he seemed for the present perfectly at his ease. But when he heard that Hassan intended to conduct them to Cara Bey, and moreover that his master acquiesced in that intention, his lips forgot to sip, his mouth to inhale smoke, and he remained with his face and mustache perfectly aghast! He did not venture at this moment to speak his sentiments, for the lieutenant of Cara Bey, who sat before him, was too formidable a personage to displease, and therefore he reserved himself for some future opportunity to warn his master of the dangers into which he was thus voluntarily thrusting himself. Cara Bey had always been the one object of his fear, whenever, crossing this part of the frontier between Turkey and Persia, he carried despatches to and from the British Embassies of Constantinople and Tehran; he had always avoided his castle, as the seat of mis-

fortune. Such stories had been related to him of his cruelties, his personal prowess, his cunning in attacking and robbing caravans, of his hatred of all Mussulmans, and of the great ability which he had displayed in setting at nought all the authorities which were opposed to him, that to fall into his hands with one's eyes open, and in full possession of one's understanding, appeared to him an act which none but a madman, and he also thought in his own secret mind, none but an Englishman, would perform. Thrown into deep cogitation by this prospect, all he could do was to comfort himself with a deep-drawn "*Allah kerîm der*—God is merciful!" sighed from the bottom of his throat, and delivering himself to *kismet*—fate, he laid himself down on the bare ground with his companions, who had already long buried their hopes and fears in the arms of sleep.

CHAPTER II.

As glowr'd *the louts*, amaz'd and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious.

BURNS.

THE sensation which had been created throughout the town of Kars by the engagement which had taken place, had entirely driven Osmond and his controversy from the heads of its inhabitants. Nothing was talked of but the machinations of Cara Bey; for, his officer having been recognised in Hassan, he was accused, and indeed not unjustly, of having been the instigator of the mischief. Curses came from every mouth upon Yezidies—and in cursing Yezidies they of course included

Kûrds ; then upon unbelievers, among whom Osmond and all Franks were freely comprehended. The Turk whom Hassan had slain, was an officer high in the confidence of the Pasha, and consequently that dignitary's wrath was excited in no small degree on that head ; but, if the truth were known, perhaps it would be found that his indignation bottomed more upon the recollection of the blow which he had received between the shoulders from Hassan's jerîd, than upon the death of his servant.

It was only at night-fall that the door-keeper of the prison, upon returning to his charge, discovered the escape of the prisoners. A Turk's misfortune, whatever it may be, soon finds relief in exclamatory words. On this occasion the jailor exclaimed, "*Allah bela ver sin*—heaven send thee a reverse !" "*Anna sena, baba sena satim*—I have sold your father and mother !" He continued to exhale his spleen in grosser forms of speech, not to be translated, which, duly ejaculated, seemed to soothe his nature

into resignation at the decrees of destiny. He completed his consolation by filling his pipe and sitting down over against the seat of his misfortune, puffed away his care, and restored his equanimity. As he pondered over the event, reflected duly upon the consequences which might in the course of things accrue to himself, he determined, in the present state of excitement of men's minds, and of the Pasha's and the Mufti's in particular, to defer the communication of it until the following morning. He scented an immediate bastinado to his own particular feet if he spoke now—he hoped that nothing more than a slight fine would be imposed if he deferred till the morrow. After the Pasha had risen on the next day, the jailor, having ascertained that he was refreshed by a bath, and that his *kief*, spirits, were in proper order, ventured to make the disclosure, and with great humility of mien and attitude stood before him. “*Ne oldou*—What has happened?” said the Pasha, upon seeing the man, and not

till then recollecting that he held a Frank in custody. “As I am your slave,” said the jailor, “I have things to say.”—“Speak on,” said the Pasha.—“As I am your slave,” returned the jailor, stroking his beard down at the same time, “the Frank is gone.”—“How!” exclaimed the Pasha: “whither is he gone?”—“What do I know, O sir! he is gone.”—“How did he go?” asked the great man, pondering deeply. “He opened the door and ran away,” said the jailor. “*Pek ayi*—very well,” said the chief, with much complacency; upon which quietly slapping his hands, to call his attendants, he said to his principal chokhadar, in as composed a manner as if he was about ordering his dinner, “Here, give this man one hundred strokes on the soles of his feet.” The poor wretch began to cry out “*Amān, amān!*—pity! pity!”—Nothing would do; he found that his prognostics were true; and, bending himself to the decrees of fate, calmly took off his socks and slippers, spread himself out on his back, put his feet into

the noose, received blows—got up, stole away to his pipe, mended the prison-door, and continued to perform his functions, muttering to himself “Allah has been merciful! well it was no worse.”

The Pasha, having sent information of what had taken place to the Mufti, that important personage, an hour before the noon-day prayer, made his appearance; and after a short conference, they determined to send for Sulciman Aga, and whoever else might be concerned, in order to see what might best be done on the occasion. The whole party being convened in the Pasha's room, were seated in solemn composure upon his sofas, smoking long pipes. Upon investigating the causes of Osmond's escape, the circumstance of his having aided that of Hassan by his attack upon the three horsemen, led to the discovery that he and his servant had been observed to issue from the Armenian dyer's court-yard, armed and mounted. An order was immediately sent for the

appearance of the unfortunate Bogos, who, with blanched cheeks and trembling frame, soon stood before the assembled chiefs. As soon as he appeared, every one present seemed anxious to salute him with some appropriate epithet. “*Kuipek oğlu*—son of a dog!” said one. “Hog of an infidel!” said another. “*Bokchi*—dung-monger!” exclaimed a third. “Where is the infidel Frank?” enquired the Mufti; “speak, or *jehanum* will be your fate!” The poor Armenian could not open his lips from excess of fear. “Speak—come, let us see,” said the Pasha in his slowest manner. “Where is he gone?” enquired Suleiman. “Where are his goods?” enquired the Mufti. At this question Bogos took courage, and immediately gave such information as he possessed of the different commodities which Osmond had left behind him in the way of luggage. There was a portmanteau containing clothes, there was a dressing-case, then a medicine-chest, books, drawing-materials, charts, mathematical instruments—in short,

every sort of thing which English travellers carry about for comfort, cleanliness, and acquiring information.

Bogos, accompanied by an officer and guards, was straightway despatched to his house to bring from it every thing which belonged to Osmond and his servants ; and ere the assembled dignitaries had had time to enjoy much more of their beloved coffee and pipes, the Armenian again stood before them. The end of the apartment was heaped up with the different articles which had been found, and curiosity having been greatly excited by the exhibition which had been made of them as they were paraded along the street, great was the rush of those who wished to obtain a sight of their contents when they should be brought to light before the Pasha.

First, the contents of the portmanteau were exhibited. It principally contained Osmond's clothes. In succession were displayed, waistcoats, neckcloths, shirts, drawers, and stockings,

which drew forth the astonishment of all present, for they wondered what one man could possibly want with so many things, the uses of most of which were to them incomprehensible. They admired the glittering beauties of a splendid uniform-jacket, which its owner carried about to wear on appearing at courts and in the presence of exalted personages; but when they came to inspect a pair of leather pantaloons, the ingenuity of the most learned amongst them could not devise for what purpose they could possibly be used. For, let it be known, that a Turk's trowsers, when extended, look like the largest of sacks used by millers, with a hole at each corner for the insertion of the legs, and, when drawn together and tied in front, generally extend from the hips to the ankles. Will it then be thought extraordinary that the comprehension of the present company was at fault as to the pantaloons? They were turned about in all directions, inside and out,

before and behind. The Mufti submitted that they might perhaps be an article of dress, and he called upon a bearded chokhadar, who stood by wrapped in doubt and astonishment, to try them on. The view which the Mufti took of them was, that they were to be worn as a head-dress, and accordingly, that part which tailors call the seat, was fitted over the turban of the chokhadar, whilst the legs fell in serpent-like folds down the grave man's back and shoulders, making him look like Hercules with the lion's skin thrown over his head.

“ *Barikallah*—praise be to Allah !” said the Mufti, “ I have found it ; perhaps this is the dress of an English Pasha of two tails !” “ *Aferin*—well done !” cried all the adherents of the law. But the Pasha was of another opinion ; he viewed the pantaloons in a totally different light, inspecting them with the eye of one who thought upon the good things of which he was fond. “ For what else can this be used,”

exclaimed the chief, his dull eye brightening up as he spoke—"what else, but for wine? This is perhaps the skin of some European animal. Franks drink wine, and they carry their wine about in skins, as our own infidels do. Is it not so?" said he, addressing himself to Bogos the Armenian. "So it is," answered the dyer, "it is even as your highness has commanded."—"Well then, this skin has contained wine," continued the Pasha, pleased with the discovery, "and, by the blessing of Allah! it shall serve us again."—"Here," said he to one of his servants, "here, take this, let the Saka sew up the holes, and let it be well filled; instead of wine it shall hold water." And true enough, in a few days after, the pantaloons were seen parading the town on a water-carrier's back, doing the duty of mesheks. But it was secretly reported that, not long after, they were converted to the use for which the Pasha intended them, and actually were appointed for the conveyance of his highness's favourite wine.

In the lid of the portmanteau was discovered a boot-jack, with a pair of steel boot-hooks. These articles put the ingenuity of the Turks to a still greater test. How could they possibly devise that so complicated a piece of machinery could, by any stretch of imagination, have any thing in common with a pair of boots, a part of dress which they pull off and on with as much ease as one inserts and reinserts a mop into a bucket? They thought it might have something to do with necromancy, then with astrology, but at length it struck them that the whole machine must be one for the purposes of torture;—what more convenient than the hinges for squeezing the thumb, or cracking the finger joints,—what better adapted than the boot-hooks for scooping out eyes? Such they decided it to be, and, in order to confirm the conclusion beyond a doubt, the Pasha ordered his favourite scribe to insert his finger between the hinges of the boot-jack, which having done with repugnance, he was rewarded

for his complaisance by as efficacious a pinch as he could wish, whilst peals of laughter went round at his expense. The instrument was then made over to the chief executioner, with orders to keep it in readiness upon the first occasion.

The various contents of the dressing-case were next brought under examination. Every one was on the look-out for something agreeable to the palate, the moment they saw the numerous bottles with which it was studded. One tasted eau-de-cologne, another lavender-water, both which they thought might or might not be Frank luxuries in the way of cordials. But who can describe the face which was made by the Pasha himself when, attracted by the brilliancy of the colour, he tossed off to his own drinking the greater part of a bottle of tincture of myrrh! The Mufti was a man who never laughed, but even he, on seeing the contortions of his colleague, could not suppress his merriment; whilst the menials around were obliged to look down, their feet reminding them

of the countenance they ought to keep, if they hoped to keep themselves free from the stick.

Whilst this was taking place, the Imam of the mosque, whose mortified looks belied his love of good things, quietly abstracted from the case a silver-mounted box, which having opened, he there discovered a paste-like substance, the smell of which he thought was too inviting to resist; he therefore inserted therein the end of his forefinger, and, scooping out as much as it could carry, straightway opened wide his mouth and received it with a smack. Soon was he visited by repentance:—he would have roared with nausea had he not been afraid of exposing himself—he sputtered—he spat. “What has happened?” said one with a grin. “*Bak*—see!” roared the Pasha, who was delighted to have found a fellow-sufferer—“*Bak*—see! the Imam is sick.” The nature of the substance which he had gulped soon discovered itself by the white foam which was seen to issue from his mouth: then other feelings pervaded the

assembly ; they apprehended a fit, they feared madness—in short, such was the state to which the unfortunate priest was reduced, that he was obliged to make a rapid escape from the assembly, every one making way for him, as one who is not to be touched. The reader need not be informed that he had swallowed a large dose of Naples soap.

Many were the mistakes which occurred besides those above-mentioned, and which it would perhaps be tedious or trifling to enumerate. They pondered deeply over every article ; they turned the books upside down, they spilt the mercury from the artificial horizon, broke the thermometers, displaced the barometer, scattered the mathematical instruments about, so that they never could be re-inserted in the case. A small ivory box attracted their attention : it was so prettily turned, so neat, and so ornamental, that, like children quarrelling for a toy, each of them longed to possess it. At length it was ceded to the Mufti. This

sapient personage had enjoyed the pleasure of laughing at others, but as yet had not been laughed at himself. Twisting the box in all directions, at length he unscrewed it, much to his satisfaction, and seeing a small tube within, surrounded by a bundle of diminutive sticks, he concluded this must be the Frank's inkstand—the liquid in the tube being the ink, the sticks the pens. He was not long in inserting one of the sticks into the tube; he drew it out, and on a sudden instantaneous light burst forth. Who can describe the terror of the Turk? He threw the whole from him, as if he had discovered that he had been dandling the *shaitan* in person. “*Ai Allah!*” he exclaimed, with eyes starting from his head, his mouth open, his hands clinging to the cushions, his whole body thrown back:—“Allah protect me! Allah, Allah, there is but one Allah!” he exclaimed in terror, looking at the little box and the little sticks, strewn on the ground before him, with an expression

of fear that sufficiently spoke his apprehension that it contained some devilry which might burst out and overwhelm him with destruction. Nor were the surrounding Turks slow in catching his feelings; they had seen the ignition, and had partaken of the shock. Every one drew back from the box and its contents, and made a circle round it: looking at it in silence, and waiting the result with terror, low “Allah Allahs!” broke from the audience, and few were inclined to laugh. At length, seeing that it remained stationary, the ludicrous situation of the Mufti began to draw attention, and as he was an object of general dislike, every one who could do so with safety, indulged in laughing at him. The grave Suleiman, who had seen more of Franks than the others, at length ventured to take up the box, though with great wariness; he was entreated, in the name of the Prophet! to put it down again by the Pasha, who then ordered Bogos, the Armenian, to take up the whole machine, sticks and all, and at his peril

instantly to go and throw it into the river ; swearing by the Koran, and by all the Imams, that if the devil ever appeared amongst them again, he would put not only him, but every Armenian and Christian in Kars, to death.

There only now remained the medicine-chest to be examined, but, seeing what had happened, every one appeared but little anxious to pursue the investigation, fearful of some new disaster. However, when Bogos had explained that it was to this the Frank had recourse when he required medicine, at that moment every Turk present seemed impelled with a desire to take some ; and, indeed, they would have proceeded to help themselves, had not the Mufti interposed, who, still with the fear of some satanic influence before his eyes, entreated them to refrain. But an expedient occurred to him which he immediately put into practice. He sent for as many Jews as could be found upon the spur of the moment, and ordered them to appear before the Pasha. A few of these

miserable outcasts lived at Kars under the severest of tyrannies, and if ever any misery was to be inflicted, were sure to come in for the first share. Very soon after the order had been given, some half-a-dozen of them were collected, and marshalled in a row at the end of the room. The bottles were taken out separately from the chest, and a certain quantity, *ad libitum*, of every medicine was administered to each of the Jews. They were then conducted into an outer room, where they sat in doleful mood, watching their approaching doom, like men condemned to some severe punishment, bewailing their misfortune, and in their hearts wishing for the destruction of their tyrants. The effects produced upon each were as various as they were effectual: the Turks looked on in horror, the Jews were absorbed in disgust. "Allah, Allah!" was exclaimed by every looker on; and by the time the whole ceremony had drawn to a close, they became all seriously convinced that their town

had been visited by the great Evil One in person; the medicine-chest was put on one side with caution, and everything which related, directly or indirectly, to Osmond, was treated with becoming suspicion.

The whole circumstance of his apparition at Kars, and his sudden departure, was duly weighed by the Pasha and his colleagues, as one of considerable importance. Those who did not believe that he was the devil, were fully persuaded that he was something more than a mere man. The whole town had been thrown into confusion by him; his history was full of mystery. He was called Osman, and still he was a Christian! He was a Frank, and still he spoke their language as if he were a Turk! He came from the North, and yet he was better acquainted with the records and manners of the East than their most learned scribes! He came nobody knew when, and disappeared nobody knew how! That he was leagued with the Evil Spirit was

evident, since he was seen in company with one of its most celebrated worshippers. The more the Turks pondered over every circumstance of his appearance, the more they shook their heads, and doubted whether all was as it should be.

Suleiman Aga was the chief of the doubters. He had seen the fascination which Osmond had exercised over his daughter ; and he even strongly opined that Zabetta's more than ordinary violence had been caused by his influence. The more pious Mussulmans advised that a general purification of the city should take place. A rumour of the massacre of all infidels was whispered about ; but what was urged as a step of the first importance was, that an expedition against all wine and wine-bibbers should be proclaimed. This took place without delay ; and ere the sun had set on that very day, not a wine-jar was to be found unbroken, nor its contents unspilled, throughout the city.

The Pasha, during all this confusion, was the only man who did not partake of the frenzy which seemed to have seized the inhabitants. He did not cease to deplore the loss of Osmond ; for, from the moment when he last ordered him to prison, he had hoped to secure him as his Pehlivan Bashi, or principal prize-fighter ; and, whether he dealt with the Evil One, or not, it signified little to the Pasha, provided he could possess a man who was powerful enough to throw every other on his back. Besides, he was charmed to have it in his power to teaze the Mufti, and never before had he seen that worthy so subdued, as when Osmond stood over him with a pistol to his breast. The destruction of the wine-jars he would willingly have prevented ; but what could he do against the priesthood ? He knew that, when once they were roused, nothing could withstand their power, and therefore he found it advisable to appear to side with them, in order that

hereafter they might grant him a more ample dispensation to crack bottles for his own gratification.

When Suleiman Aga returned to his house after the occurrences just described, he found his wife impelled by more violence than she had ever before exhibited. The departure of Osmond had deprived her of the hope which she had cherished of making him an instrument in her projected emancipation from Kars. She felt that her fetters were now riveted for ever. When would a Frank and a Greek, combined, again appear at Kars, and in a manner so likely to be useful to her? She might live to threescore ere such an event happened again! In her rage she laid the whole defeat of her hopes on the shoulders of her husband; she upbraided him in no measured terms; she called him by every base epithet which her tongue could devise. The fine theme of injustice, cruelty, rapaciousness, and inhospitality, which the treatment

of Osmond had given her, she freely descanted upon. She called it persecution; swore that it arose out of hatred to her who had once been a Christian; and raved about the revenge she would take. She even accused Ayesha of having combined against her. When Suleiman was not present, she upbraided her with not having made use of her charms so to enslave the Frank, that he would rather have given up his religion than have abandoned her! She deplored her condition; nothing would satisfy her.

Ayesha bore all with meekness; for her spirit was supported by the recollections of her last interview with her lover. This she kept fondly within the recesses of her heart, as the prisoner in a dungeon secretes the prohibited lamp from his gaoler. Hope was awakened by his last words; they were to her as the words of promise to the despondent Christian on his death-bed. She knew that she could trust in him: he had assured her

that he would return to her ; whatever might happen, she possessed that assurance : that was enough for her present happiness ; the rest lay in the hands of Providence. And here, for the present, our narrative must leave her.

CHAPTER III.

The further I went, and the closer I examined the remains of this vast capital (Anni), the greater was my admiration.—KERR PORTER'S *Travels*, vol. i. p. 73.

OSMOND and his companions throughout the night enjoyed as deep a sleep as if they had reposed upon beds of down; and, ere the day dawned, they and their horses being thoroughly refreshed, had left their resting-place, and proceeded again upon their journey. They travelled at first in silence, and followed the steps of their guide without asking a question. Except the trampling of their horses' hoofs, and the smoke of their pipes, which, leaving a train behind, scented the morning air, there were no indications of their march.

By the time Mustafa had finished his first pipe, he began to collect his wits, and then to reflect whither he and his master were going. In proportion as his imagination warmed, did his fears increase, as he contemplated the moment of meeting Cara Bey; and he almost came to the conclusion, that he was happier in prison at Kars, with a hope of flight before him, than he was now, at liberty and on horseback, bound, as he imagined, to certain destruction. He thought and smoked, and smoked and thought, until his mind was perfectly bewildered in a maze of apprehension and uncertainty: at times he would resolve to slink behind and run away; but then, recollecting what a sorry figure he should cut were he to be caught, he determined to keep under the protection of his master, and abide by the consequences. At length, watching his opportunity, when he remarked that Hassan was at a sufficient distance ahead not to be overheard, he stole up gently to Osmond's side, and said,

with a mysterious air and a half-supplicating look, "Do you know whither that fellow," pointing to their conductor, "is taking you?"

"Yes," said Osmond, "we are going to visit Cara Bey — where else can we go?"

"*Amān! Amān!*—pity, pity!" exclaimed Mustafa, looking pinched and wretched with the cold of the morning, and at the same time shaking his jacket. "Cara Bey is one devil! You don't know this man! He is worse than all men! He cuts men's throats for pleasure! — a throat is the same to him as a melon, he cuts one with as much indifference as the other. *Vi! vi! vi!* You don't know Cara Bey — the Mufti of Kars is a man compared to him! Why do we go to him? Here are plenty of roads and an open country."

Osmond turned round to take a survey of Mustafa's person ere he answered; and certainly, had he been inclined to laugh at another's misery, he might have so done in this instance. The poor fellow appeared to have

withered up during the night to less than half the size which he was ere he slept — he looked the picture of woe; his little face exhibited a compound of various colours — his sprigs of mustache fell in a small streak down each corner of his mouth, and his large ears protruded from his head somewhat like the splashboards of a carriage. He sat on his horse, cold and ill at ease. Occasionally one might hear a vibration of his jaws, as his teeth beat against each other; and when he spoke, his words came out between a whine and a moan.

Osmond smiled at his looks, and would have laughed outright, had not his proper feelings prevented him from increasing the load of misery which evidently weighed down his companion. “Why, Mustafa!” he exclaimed with a cheering voice, “one might almost think, to judge by your looks, that we were going to have our throats cut too?”

“And so we shall,” muttered the other between his teeth.

“Whither else can we go but to Cara Bey?” continued Osmond. “After having been saved from destruction by Hassan, can we in honour refuse to accompany him? You do not think that *he* would cut our throats, do you?”

“*Allah bilir*—God knows!” said Mustafa; “he is one devil too.”

“Devil or no devil,” said Osmond, “we must follow him—what else can we do?”

Mustafa thought to himself, though he did not venture to express it aloud, that they were now three to two—that there was nothing to prevent them from taking the road they pleased, and that in Turkey no one much weighed the doctrine of right and wrong. However, he satisfied himself by merely shrugging up his shoulders and exclaiming, “*Allah kerim*—God is merciful!” To this sentiment Osmond fully assented, for he too was not without his apprehensions as to what might be the result of this part of his adventures. He had heard so much of the lawless and sa-

vage nature of Cara Bey's character and profession, and so many stories of his cruelty to prisoners, and of his treachery towards those who had confided in him, that he felt he was, in fact, acting an imprudent part thus to place himself in his power. But then he reflected that he could be no object to any man's rapacity, poor and denuded as he was. The very horse which he bestrode did not belong to him, and his guide would soon inform the gang they were about to visit, that whatever property he had possessed had fallen into the hands of the Turks at Kars. But, whatever might be his doubts or his apprehensions, he always returned to the obligations which Hassan's noble conduct had imposed upon him; and happen what might, he determined that nothing should prevent him from evincing his gratitude for the services rendered to him, and that by trusting himself in this instance to his guidance.

Stasso, in the mean while, had so well ingratiated himself with Hassan and his comrade,

that he had engaged them in conversation upon a subject which he knew was likely to be a matter of great importance to his master as well as to himself, namely, upon the conduct they ought to adopt in approaching Cara Bey. At first they appeared shy in answering Stas-so's questions, but, little by little, they allowed themselves to be more communicative. It was plain that they lived in the greatest awe of their chief—they hinted that nothing but perfect submission to his commands could conciliate him—that he was of all men the most suspicious—that he scrupled at no means to gain his ends, and would by treachery, if he could not by open violence, get rid of any one who stood in his path. Hassan owned that he never appeared before him without trembling, and although he knew that he enjoyed more of his confidence than any other man, still, that he was obliged to be wary and circumspect in all he did or said. He described him as superstitious to the last degree, and that

his faith in the power of talismans and amulets was unbounded — his arms groaned under the weight of amulets, each containing something which he thought might preserve him from impending danger. He never stirred without consulting his priest, a most noted Yezidi, upon the result of any undertaking, and this individual was scarcely ever out of his sight. He passed his time between pleasures of the grossest kind, and preparing himself and his gang for new attacks and new depredations. To those who behaved with bravery and devotedness, he was a liberal master; and this, with his known ability and resources in danger, was the secret of his power of attaching his followers to his person. He was brave himself, and so ardent an admirer of bravery in others, that an act of gallantry performed under his eyes was certain to ensure his respect and admiration.

“How will he treat my master?” said Stasso.

There was an evident hesitation in Hassan’s

manner in answering this question — he looked perplexed and in doubt; at length, he had recourse to the only word which could redeem him from perplexity, and said, “*Ba-kalum!*”

This satisfied Stasso that every precaution should be taken on the part of his master, as well as of himself, to secure a prompt retreat from Cara Bey’s power; and this to be done by stratagem, if it could not be effected by fair means. He therefore determined within himself to notice with the most scrupulous attention the whole face of the country which surrounded the chieftain’s residence; to mark the relative positions of prominent points of land; to observe the directions of roads; and, in short, to acquire every information which could be of use, should it be their lot to find themselves wanderers without a guide on the surface of the great tract of country which lay before them.

They travelled prosperously onwards during

the day, laying by at noon to give their horses rest. Cara Bey's castle, perched on a commanding eminence, was seen in the blue horizon, as the sun was about to set, and, in order to reach it, it was necessary to cross a chain of arid hills, on the further side of which flowed the Arpachai—a river which we have before named, and celebrated in this narrative for Osmond's feat in saving the life of Hassan. The sun set gloriously, tinging every height with his golden beams, enhancing the ruggedness of some, and slanting over the gentle declivities of others; to his dazzling light succeeded the subdued and soft light of the moon, which being at the full, rose with unclouded beauty, and gave a charm to the landscape, glancing in playful streaks over the rushing waters of the river, and throwing long slopes of the adjacent mountains into unbroken masses of shade. The five horsemen rode quietly onwards, enjoying their security, for they felt themselves now within the influence of Cara

Bey's power ; and although he in fact owned no territory but that upon which his castle was built, yet still, such was the terror of his name, that none but the most fool-hardy would venture to travel in his neighbourhood, unless in such numbers as to defy his attacks. On a sudden, as they turned the abrupt angle of a defile, Osmond's eye was arrested by the vision of what he supposed was an immense city. Walls, houses, towers, cupolas, and battlements, arose before him in massive groups, exhibiting to his astonished mind, not the small and insignificant structures of a common Asiatic town, but the severe and well-defined masses of antient times, such as one fond of classic illusions might imagine to have been the residence of Greeks or Romans. Although some of its angles were glanced upon by the moon, its principal outlines were in deep shade ; the whole bearing so dark, awful, and mysterious an appearance, that a poet might without much exaggeration have called it " The Spectre City."

Osmond was struck with astonishment, and gave himself up to contemplation: he could think of nothing but the sublimity of the view before him, and did not at first trouble himself to enquire its history: but without enquiry, he was certain that what he had so abruptly stumbled upon, could be nothing else than the famous remains of Anni, formerly one of the principal cities of Armenia. His companions scarcely noticed what so powerfully struck Osmond; for, in their ignorance, they passed unheeded any ruins or remains rendered interesting merely by recollections of the past. Hassan called them the remains of a Giaour city. Mustafa shuddered when he heard them called the ruins of Anni, for he knew them to be the head-quarters of banditti, and had always shunned their approach with as much care as his master now hailed their vicinity with joy. Stasso eyed them with respect, for he recognised the remains of churches among the towering groups,

and occasionally distinguished the sign of the cross; but, when he was told that they had belonged to Armenians, his Greek prejudices arose in his breast, and he did not deign to make his sign of the cross, which, had they belonged to his own nation, he would have done without intermission.

It was not long before the travellers, having passed the first broken outskirts, began to wind through the desolate streets. There was not sufficient light to exhibit every detail of ruin, and an ignorant observer might have mistaken what he saw for a flourishing city, the inhabitants of which had suddenly been smitten by the plague, or with one consent had abandoned their homes and fled. The silence which prevailed was fearful, and struck involuntary horror. House succeeded house in sad array, and not a sound was heard. A magnificent structure, looking like a royal palace, lifted up its walls and towers, cutting the clear blue vault of heaven with its angular

-

lines, and lighted up by the moon in its splendour. The travellers paced along at the foot of its walls; the only noise which broke the still air was that of the reverberating hoofs of their horses, heard in echoes throughout the long deserted courts. Osmond would have questioned Hassan, — but observed that he also was full of thought, and rode on with caution as if he feared to meet with some unwelcome vision. He looked at Mustafa, — who seemed the personification of despair; if ever so awful a passion would condescend to put up with so diminutive a representative. Stasso kept up his spirits by every now and then exclaiming, “*Ti diavolo!*” At length, very distant and indistinct sounds, as if from the beating of a small drum, accompanied by strange screams or voices of men, either in pain or in frenzy, or in outrageous merriment, stole upon the ear, and broke the silent spell which seemed to have arrested every tongue.

“What is that?” exclaimed Mustafa, as he

pulled in his horse's bridle and trembled from head to foot.

“What can it be?” answered Osmond, not a little startled by so strange a circumstance : “if this were the land of elves and fairies, one might suppose this was their capital.”

“Hassan Aga !” roared out Stasso, “tell me, my soul ! what has happened — what do we hear ?”

Hassan, after a pause, lending his whole attention to the sounds, after having stopped his horse and again urged it forward, said, with a voice not the most encouraging, and with evident signs of perturbation, — “It is Cara Bey !”

Mustafa, on hearing these words, would have fallen from his horse, had not his scared senses been restored to him by the firmness of his master's voice, who, overjoyed at having at length reached the object of their search, urged Hassan to push on, and introduce him into the presence of his redoubted chief.

They made for the spot whence came the sounds, and after having wound for some time through a succession of skeleton-like streets, which appeared to be familiar to Hassan, all at once he stopped near a ruined archway, the entrance to some once large mansion, and desired them there to await his return. They did so, and instantly he and his companion disappeared; the steps of their horses gradually becoming fainter as they increased their distance, until they entirely died away upon the ear.

Osmond dismounted, and seating himself upon the fragment of an architrave, the moonbeams darting full upon him, whilst his servants stood near him, he leaned his head upon his hand, wearied with the day's journey, and gave himself up to reflection.

The mysterious tone which Hassan had recently adopted, and his evident perturbation at the vicinity of Cara Bey, made him reflect that there must be something more in the character

of this man than he had imagined ; and that, if there were not danger to be encountered, at least there was a great degree of caution necessary to be preserved. Several times a thought would cross his mind that even now he might be free, by avoiding the meeting with Cara Bey, and endeavouring to make the Russian frontier, which he knew could not be very far distant. But every time this thought arose, another would immediately oppose itself, in which the image of his Ayesha was presented to his mind in colours so vivid and fascinating that he could not prevail upon himself to abandon scenes which might again afford him the pleasure of seeing her. He never ceased, either directly or indirectly, to fix his thoughts upon her ; — to leave her for ever appeared to him almost as great a crime as to abjure his faith. He had so impressed himself with the certainty that she was not a child of Turkish parents, and that her history, if fully investigated, would

disclose to him secrets which, if brought to light, would lead to the happiness, not only of himself, but of many others — that, every time he thought of escaping from his present situation and seeking the protection of others, he felt that he was doing her an injustice, that he was acting cruelly towards her, and that nothing but the most positive necessity should ever prevent him from devoting himself to her happiness.

Both Mustafa and Stasso had watched their master's looks with considerable anxiety ever since Hassan had left them, and thought that he betrayed symptoms of impatience at his absence. The strange noises which they had heard, and which still at intervals struck their ear, had much shaken their nerves, and had given reality to the thousand and one stories which they had heard of the life and character of the man they were about to visit. They sounded like the midnight orgies of some infernal being, and, as they occasionally became

louder, might have been taken for a sort of flourish preparatory to the introduction of the demon of wickedness on the stage.

Mustafa could no longer maintain silence, but, overcome by his increasing apprehensions, broadly entreated his master to take advantage of the favourable moment for escape. He pointed out the facilities which the surrounding vastness of the ruined city afforded for concealment; and asserted that, once having regained the plain, there could be no difficulty in eluding any search which might be made for them. "Besides," said he, whilst he furnished up a momentary bit of courage, "are there not three of us? Mashallah! there is you; then there is me; and here is Stasso. — Cara Bey indeed! I laugh at his mother! Be you but safe, and we do not care a para for him." At that moment he thought he heard the distant tread of a horse, when his valour died away, and he again became silent through apprehension.

Stasso, too, urged every argument to induce his master to escape. “Effendi !” said he, “who knows what this devil may be ? We hear everywhere that he is the greatest wretch ever known ; that nothing stands in the way of his humour. That Hassan there, even he, told me just now, shuddering as he spoke, that he spares neither man, woman, nor child, in the pursuit of his villany ; and that you, Effendi, when you appear before him, must be very cautious not to displease him : that a word, either one way or the other, may excite his wrath, and lead to mischief. Let me speak to you now, O my master ! there is still time : I have noted every inch of the way—I know the direction of all the mountains. The Peak of Aligez is not very far distant ; and one can never mistake the position of *Agridagh* (Ararat). Before many hours have elapsed we could be within the territory of Persia, and then, may the devil take Cara Bey ! What say you, Effendi ?

Shall I get the horses? A word from you, and we are off."

These were words of temptation to Osmond, and suited the humour into which Hassan's delay had thrown his mind. So long as he was in action, and his thoughts bent upon one object, so long had he refrained from reflecting upon the dangers and difficulties which he was likely to encounter; but this pause had opened the gate for the intrusion of doubts and fears. The impulse in favour of Ayesha began to weaken as the delay increased: he reflected that he might aid her in some more effectual manner, by not submitting himself to Cara Bey's power: he thought that he might be at greater liberty to reward Hassan, were he to place himself in a more independent position than he was now likely to be in. Hassan himself, by this delay, perhaps wished to afford him an opportunity of escaping: he conceived that it might not be looked upon as a breach of confidence were

he to do so : in short, arguments for taking this step now flowed so fast, that he was on the point of ceding to them. He rose from his seat ; Stasso had brought his horse close to him ; Mustafa was already mounted, and Osmond was actually about to put his foot into the stirrup with the determination of departure, when horse's footsteps were heard approaching with such speed that there could no longer be any illusion. Mustafa's tremors came on again ; Stasso said "*Ti diavolo !*" within his teeth ; and Osmond seated himself in his saddle, ready to await the result. At length Hassan appeared : he came in haste, and apparently full of care. All his words bespoke haste. " Come, come !" said he, " the Aga wants you. Do not wait. I have seen him ; he wants you."

" Hassan," said Osmond with dignity, " am I welcome ? If not, I will not approach your chief. You have been my friend, and I well know how to show you my gratitude ; but if

I am not welcome to Cara Bey, I do not proceed."

"Come, come, my Aga!" exclaimed Hassan with evident signs of perturbation; "the Bey, it is true, is somewhat hasty; he is a bit of fire; he is a quick man, and likes to be obeyed in an instant: it is on that account I am anxious that we should not delay. But, Inshallah! you will receive welcome! He is not the man to turn away from those who seek his skirt. Bismillah! Come on, in the name of Allah!"

Upon this Osmond, lending himself to the impatience of his guide, and slowly turning his horse's head in the proper direction, followed his steps, accompanied by his two attendants. They had not proceeded far before they caught glimpses here and there of men's heads darkly peeping from behind the ruins, and occasionally groups of horses, with indications of troops on a march, were seen. These objects increased as they advanced, and it was evident that some predatory excursion

was on foot. Men in the picturesque Kurdish costume, some on the watch, armed from head to foot, wielding the characteristic lance of that people—others asleep in recumbent attitudes—others, again, seated round fires, were now plainly seen, and bespoke the vicinity of their chief. A more striking moonlight scene could not well be imagined: overhanging turrets, broken battlements, lengthened walls, arose on all sides. Parts of the fragments, overgrown with wild vegetation, were lighted up by the pale gleaming of the moon, whilst the deepest shade concealed the remainder, and presented a series of outlines which became mysterious from being undefined. The whole was diversified by the shadowy forms of men, and horses and other cattle, producing a picture to which the pen or the pencil would find it difficult to do justice. Osmond would willingly have paused to enjoy it at his leisure, but he was impelled onwards by his guide, whose protection gave him security among the

lawless gang through which he was about to pass, and who probably otherwise would not have failed to make him their prey. At length they reached the front of a large building, evidently the remains of a Christian church. Built in the form of a cross, one of its sides, in the centre of which was the principal entrance, was terminated by a lofty pediment, and opened upon the square in which the building was situated. A triangular steeple rose from the summit of the roof, and presented to the eye a form of architecture so like a European place of worship, that Osmond could scarcely believe that he was far away from the blessings of his own Christian country, and in the midst of ruthless barbarians. The whole square was full of armed men, evidently ready at a moment's notice to obey the call of their chief, who was now close at hand. Presently Hassan, with a look of agitation, casting his eyes behind him, and looking at Osmond, said, "In the name of

Allah ! let us dismount ; the chief is here.”
Upon which Osmond dismounted, and giving his horse in charge to one of the standers by, followed Hassan, accompanied by Mustafa and Stasso, and together they entered the small court by which the church was enclosed.

CHAPTER IV.

Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog !
 Thou that wast seal'd in thy nativity
 The slave of Nature and the son of Hell !

Richard III.

THE great gate of the church, being unenclosed by doors, presented to the sight of Osmond, as he approached it, an immense glare of torchlight, which fell upon the ruined and dilapidated ornaments of its interior, as well as upon a large crowd of variously-dressed people. The scene was as strange as it was impressive. In front was the ancient altar, backed by a recess of highly-wrought fretwork in stone, in the centre of which stood conspicuous the sacred emblem of the cross ; the high ceiling,

supported by heavy pillars with grotesque capitals, received the rays of the brilliant light, and disclosed many details of sculpture which would be interesting to the scientific traveller; whilst the walls, broken into heavy compartments, engraved with Armenian inscriptions, and diversified by carved window-frames of stone, showed, by the cracks and fissures which intersected them, that the hand of time was not to be cheated of its slow but certain labour.

Osmond's eye could not rest upon objects which at another time would have absorbed his attention, but fell upon a figure recumbent, in a half-indolent, half-animated attitude, on carpets spread on the ground, and against cushions which rested upon the very steps of the altar. To describe the countenance of this person, or give an idea of the sensation which his appearance produced in Osmond, would be difficult. His countenance seemed as it were the rallying point of every

evil passion; he looked the very personification of wickedness.

He was rather inclined to be fat and bloated; but his cheeks were pale and livid, his forehead of a marble whiteness, whilst the lower part of the face was dark and blue. The nose was strongly arched, the mouth drawn down and full, with two strong lines on either side, and the cheek-bones broad. But it was the eyes which gave the look of the demon to the whole. Their brilliancy was almost superhuman; it might be said, "they flashed intolerable day;" they shone through the shade of an overhanging brow, like torches within a cavern. There was an obliquity in their look which produced deformity and gave a cast of villany to their expression—had they been well matched, they would have been accounted beautiful. And, withal, the settled tone of the features was a fixed smile. He was remarkable for a scowl on the brow, and a smile on the lip—a smile denoting contempt

of everything good, which did not vanish even at the sight of inflicted tortures and agonizing death. Such was the man before whom Osmond stood, and this was Cara Bey. In his person he was tall and muscular, and the breadth of his shoulders, and the deepness of his chest, spoke for his strength.

Every object by which he was surrounded, showed him to be a voluptuary. He was waited upon by richly-dressed attendants ; dancers fantastically decked in brocades, velvets, and silks, with flowing ribbons and a profusion of pendent hair, were doing their utmost, by studied contortions and measured attitudes, to draw forth his approbation ; whilst all the ingredients for excess in wine and gluttony were placed before him.

His only companion was a most singular-looking person, whose appearance bespoke neither a warrior nor a man of the pen. He looked more like a ruffian grafted on a priest. He was as thin and ill-favoured as the other

was the contrary. His hollow cheek and sunken eye did not announce him to be a great partaker of the good things which were spread before his chief. All strength had apparently left him. The small features which he possessed were scarcely discernible, owing to a profusion of hair, which he allowed to grow uncut and untrimmed over his face, whilst the only part which he kept shorn was his protruding chin. This creature, ill-omened and ill-conditioned as he naturally was, was rendered doubly so by the dress which he wore, the colours of which were a mixture of blue and black. Their dark hue combined, gave him the look of a man of woe; whilst from his head-dress flowed a profusion of black silk trimming and tassels, that threw his swarthy features into constant shade. This personage sate at a respectable distance from Cara Bey, and looked more like an automaton, than one intended to go through the offices of life. He was, in fact, a priest of the

Yezidies, of whom Cara Bey was one of the most devoted disciples, and he never left his side. To him Cara Bey referred on all occasions, and by his words was he guided according to the strange and extravagant rites and ceremonies of their odious worship.

Osmond was allowed to stand unnoticed for some time before Cara Bey took heed of him, or seemed to be aware of his presence. At length, Hassan having ventured to announce his arrival, whilst he made his obeisance, the monster cast his eyes upwards, and eyeing Osmond and his attendants in silence, scrutinizing them from head to foot, and looking too suspicious not to throw doubt upon the sincerity of his greeting, he said doggedly “*Khosh geldin*—you are welcome !”

Osmond having made his proper answer, stood aloof in deep attention to everything which surrounded him, and at once perceived that his conduct in this emergency demanded the greatest circumspection, for evi-

dently his safety required that he should give way to the humours of a wretch of no small pretensions.

After a pause, turning to Hassan, Cara Bey said, "A Frank you say he is, is it so?"

"Yes," said Hassan, "so it is."

"What is his name?" said the chief.

"*Osman*," answered Hassan, giving it the true Turkish expression.

"*Osman!*" exclaimed the other; "why then he must be a Mussulman, how is that?"

"*Osman!*" repeated Hassan, "so he calls himself."

"Does he talk Turkish?" enquired Cara Bey, with much animation.

"He does," answered the other. Then addressing himself at once to Osmond in a loud tone, Cara Bey exclaimed:

"How is this? you a Frank, and called *Osman*? this cannot be!" Osmond endeavoured to explain the difference between his own name and the Turkish *Osman*, but in so

doing, expressed himself with idioms so truly characteristic of the language, and so like a native, that Cara Bey, on hearing him, remained perfectly astonished, and, what is more, confirmed in his suspicions that he was not what he professed himself to be.

“No Frank talks Turkish as this man,” muttered Cara Bey to himself, although loud enough to be heard. “*Bak*—see!” said he, addressing himself to Hassan: “if there is any treachery in this, I look to you—your head shall pay for it. *Angnadinme*—have you understood me?”

Upon which Osmond answered boldly: “If you suspect us, bid us depart. We come to you for protection; we have been basely treated by the Turks, who, but for your officer, would have put us to death. All we require is to return to our own countries. Send us to your neighbours, the Moscovs; or, if you object to that, to your other neighbours, the Persians. We do not wish to remain with you, if you think us traitors.”

“To my neighbours the Moscovs!” cried Cara Bey, tauntingly; “well, very well—Mashallah! so you think me an ass! So you would have me send one who has been a spy in my camp, to my bitterest enemy!—Or to my neighbours the Persians! better still. The foul red-caps! who do not allow a year to pass without endeavouring to destroy me and my castle. Perhaps they have paid you for coming. Thanks to Allah! Cara Bey is not come to that pitch of stupidity yet. Is it not so?” said he, turning round to his priest: “is Cara Bey all at once become a fool of that magnitude?”

The dark man uttered a few sounds which were unintelligible, but which evidently marked his obsequiousness, and then remained as fixed and immoveable as ever.

“What then can I propose?” said Osmond. “Try me: all I can say is, that I am no Musulman, I am an Englishman: I come to you for protection; if you do not choose to grant it to me, *Sen ektiar der*—you are the master!”

Upon this Cara Bey, knitting his sullen brows more than usual, remained silent for some minutes, and then muttered to himself, "Try you !" after which, turning to his oracle, he enquired, " Shall I try him ?" To which the dark man in answer said, " Try him."

" Well," said Cara Bey, " there is no harm done, I will try you. If you are a Frank, you must be acquainted with the manners of Franks, and, if of Franks, of Muscovites. See ! this very morning I am about to attack a neighbouring village which belongs to the Russians and is garrisoned by their troops. You shall prove to me there whether you be my friend or my enemy. If my friend, you can help me ; if my enemy, *Bak !*—by this beard ! I swear, were you to take refuge under the throne, or under the grandfather of the throne of the king, or of the father of the king of the Franks, I, I, who am Cara Bey, I would find you out ! More I say not—only of this be assured, that my eyes, the eyes of Cara Bey," (upon

which he glared with more than usual fierceness,) “ shall be upon you ; from them you cannot escape, and by them you will be judged. Have you understood me ?”

“ I have understood you,” answered Osmond boldly, “ and I agree to the trial.”

“ So be it,” said Cara Bey : “ and here, if you be a Frank, let me see you drink off this cup of wine.”

Upon which a small basin full of wine was brought to him, which he would not willingly have touched, but, considering the exigency of the moment, drank off.

“ *Aferin!* — well done !” came from the monster, who deemed drinking wine one of the tests of being a Christian, and who, consequently, laughed at the scruples of Mahomedans on that head.

Cara Bey then cast a look upon Stasso and Mustafa. Perceiving that the latter was a Turk, he fixed his eyes fiercely upon him, and enquired, “ Who may you be ?”

Mustafa, who had already shrunk to half his original size from fear, and apprehending that some test of bravery would also be required of him, stammered out a few unconnected words in a tone so suppliant, that Cara Bey was more excited to merriment than to anger by the sorry figure which he cut.

“ So they call you a man in Turkey,” said the ruffian chief, “ do they ?”

“ What can I do ?” said Mustafa ; “ I am a Tatar, and, if you please, a man,” taking up a little more courage as he spoke.

“ Mashallah !—a man !—hah !” roared out the chief in an offensive laugh. “ Such men as you are good to keep women in order. My harem is in want of one such. What say you—are you ready ?”

Upon this he laughed outright, and was answered by the obsequious chuckle of his surrounding attendants, whilst poor Mustafa’s face flushed crimson with a rage which he was forced to suppress.

“ And who are you ? ” exclaimed the chief, looking at Stasso. “ You indeed are a man. Mashallah ! we are in want of such arms and shoulders as you possess.”

“ I am Milord Osmond’s servant,” said Stasso, nothing abashed.

“ Both these men are attached to me,” said Osmond ; “ they have travelled with me from Constantinople through all parts of Asia, and I can answer for their good conduct.”

“ Very well,” said Cara Bey ; “ very well. *Bakalum !*—we shall see ! ”

He then called for a cup of wine, which he drank off ; and after that, assuming a tone of protection, which made Osmond shudder with indignation, he called him to sit by him, and in so doing, ordered his music to strike up, and his dancers to recommence their feats.

As soon as Osmond was seated, Cara Bey, under cover of the music, (for even he respected Asiatic prejudices sufficiently not to

talk openly of women,) began to question him concerning his adventures at Kars, and particularly with reference to the daughter of Suleiman Aga. The reputation of her charms seemed to be well known to him; he dwelt much upon what he had heard of her excellence, and talked of her with a freedom and a licence which fully developed the wickedness of his nature. Feelings of horror rose in Osmond's breast, in a manner which he could with difficulty suppress, upon hearing his odious remarks: his colour came and went; he could scarcely find words to answer the questions put to him, which mainly tended to ascertain the precise spot of her dwelling, and the best manner of invading it. A host of new ideas came across his mind when he found that the monster's intention was neither more nor less than to invade the city and to seize upon Ayesha for himself. As he sat on the odious cushions, his ears stunned by the din of the infernal music, his eyes offended

by the coarseness and barbarism of the dances, and seated side by side with one who was a devil in all his characteristics, though he might not really be one in person, he felt a disgust and a rage which almost deprived him of his senses, and left him in a state of stupefaction. "And all this abomination too," said he to himself, "in what has once been a Christian church!"

Such an accumulation of horrors might have deprived any other but one of Osmond's sound mind, of all power of action; but, making an effort upon himself, he determined to dissemble his real feelings, in the hope of being able to devise some mode of warding off from his mistress the impending blow. On a sudden he felt an energy and a resolution spring up within him to protect the innocent maiden to the utmost extent of his abilities and strength, even should it cost him his life; but fearing lest, at this particular moment, his disgust might betray

him into some act of imprudence, he did not refrain from appearing to enter into the spirit of the scene before him, and even to drink of the wine that was repeatedly offered to him, more than he ever before had ventured to do. The result was, that he lulled Cara Bey's suspicions, and found himself at liberty to reflect upon his situation, and upon the line of action he ought to adopt.

By this time it was nearly midnight, when the chieftain, turning to Hassan, ordered him to take charge of Osmond and his servants, to see them provided with food and other necessaries, and, particularly, that a good horse should be provided for him in the ensuing attack upon the Russians. He then dismissed his dancers, musicians, and attendants, and ordered every one to be in readiness on horseback two hours before the break of day; and forthwith rolling himself up in his fur-cloak, he fell asleep upon the spot on which he had passed the evening.

When left to himself, Osmond for some time attempted in vain to unravel the complicated knot of difficulties with which he was encompassed. He found himself in the hands of one whom he was in honour compelled not to betray, although, were he to do so, it was evident he would be the means of ridding the world of one of the greatest criminals that encumbered its surface. He had, moreover, in some measure, bound himself to further his views; for, in self-preservation, he was about lending himself to an attack which might lead to bloodshed. He felt that it would be in vain to attempt flight; — besides, if he did, he must give up all chance of endeavouring to protect his Ayesha, who, from what he had heard from Cara Bey, and from what he had already seen of his character, would inevitably fall into his hands. The more he thought upon the line of conduct he ought to pursue, the less was he able to see his way before him. Of course, he felt that, under Providence, much must

be left to the chapter of accidents, and to his own promptitude of decision at the moment of action ; and as he pondered on what might happen, his heart was refreshed by the hope that all his present miseries would work out for him a futurity of happiness, and would, perhaps, be the means, not only of delivering Ayesha from her Turkish bondage altogether, but of uniting her to him for ever, and of placing her in that situation of life to which his warm imagination assured him she was entitled. Happen what might, he determined in the present case to keep aloof from the fight, and not to interfere, except to save the life of a fellow-creature, and to prevent the effusion of blood. Full of such-like thoughts, it is not surprising, that when the signal was heard for the gang (for we will not honour it by any other name) to prepare themselves and their horses to march, Osmond rose totally unrefreshed by sleep. For the first time during his travels he felt really oppressed

and unhappy: his spirit of adventure had never carried him so far as to contemplate the possibility of his ever becoming leagued with robbers, assassins, and freebooters; and here he was one among those "whose hand was against every one, and every one's hand against them." He endeavoured to cheer himself by a feeling of conscious rectitude, and by the hope that some lucky opportunity would soon intervene, which would enable him with honour to clear himself from his present entanglement. But, surrounded as he was on all sides by ferocious men bent upon deeds of blood and rapine, his heart sank within him; nor would he, perhaps, have been relieved from this state of despondency, had he not sought comfort, where true comfort is only to be acquired, at the foot of the throne of grace. A flood of tears came to his relief, as he fervently and earnestly prayed to God for pardon and protection; and like a drooping plant which acquires fresh life and vigour from a refreshing

shower, so, after this exercise, did his mind regain its energy, and his heart strength and peace, conscious of being under the protection of that Almighty power which sees all and directs all for the benefit of his creatures.

The troop was not long in collecting. From different parts of the surrounding ruins, horsemen, by three and four at a time, were seen to issue, and to make for the place of rendezvous, — the square in front of the chieftain's quarters. Everything was done in silence. The picturesque forms of the men, in their wild costume, with lances resting on the shoulder, were discerned gliding through the darkness, passing and re-passing among the ruins, like evil spirits on the move, bent upon mischief.

Osmond was called upon by Hassan to attend his chief, who, the foremost of the band, was already mounted, awaiting the gathering together of his adherents. Cara Bey showed himself to be as vigorous and intelligent in

action, as he was indolent and sensual in repose. His eye was everywhere. He distinguished the active by his approbation, and censured the tardy. His own interest led him to the right path in securing the devotedness of his followers: he was liberal to them, though unrelenting in his rapacity to acquire the means of that liberality. He talked to all with familiarity; but whenever he found it necessary to be severe, the blow was struck at once, and the result of this vigour of decision tended to secure his power and establish his authority.

The whole troop was assembled when Osmond joined it: it consisted of about one hundred men, who were not marshalled in regular order, but compressed into one compact mass. Cara Bey but slightly noticed Osmond as he approached to greet him, and, satisfied that he was properly guarded by several confidential servants whom he had placed around him, he occupied himself in giving requisite orders,

and taking every precaution to ensure his success.

The Russians, whose increasing power in Georgia, and to the south of the Caucasus, had brought them in contact with the frontiers of Turkey, possessed an advanced post, almost touching the base of the abrupt hill upon which the castle of Cara Bey was situated. They had frequently attempted to dislodge him, but without success ; and he, in return, never lost an opportunity of annoying them, sometimes attacking their military stations unawares, and running off with prisoners ; at others, making a feint upon one point, whilst he plundered another. On the present occasion, he was informed that the small detachment which occupied the post in his neighbourhood, had been recently changed ; and hoping to take advantage of the supposed inexperience of the new commander, he determined to attack it — to destroy it, if possible, or, at all events, to carry away as

many prisoners as the fortune of war might throw into his hands. He collected his men in the ruins of Anni, in order to cloak his operations; and now he expected that he should be able to come upon the enemy unawares, and achieve an easy conquest.

At length, some two hours before break of day, the troop began its march. They defiled through the ruins in silence and with the caution of freebooters; the only voice heard was that of the chief—shrill, loud, and querulous, which every now and then would sound in echoes among the projecting walls and high towers, and, instead of cheering, infuse a cold creeping of horror in the hearts of those who heard it. Mustafa felt it vibrate through every nerve, and he accompanied it, whenever it fell upon his ear, with suitable execrations at its owner—execrations, however, which he carefully concealed at the bottom of his throat. Stasso did his best to assume the Turk both in look and manner, although, in his heart, he

would have been happy to accompany his master on any other expedition than the present. Osmond rode onwards absorbed in thought, watching ever and anon the approach of day, — that day, thought he, which might perhaps seal his fate in this world.

CHAPTER V.

Ils levèrent une trappe cachée sous des nattes, et me forcèrent de descendre à l'aide de la corde dans un puits dont je ne pus alors entrevoir le fond.

Voyage de Jaubert en Arménie, &c. p. 42.

As the day began to break, objects, which had hitherto been obscured by darkness, were gradually developed. On the one side, the *Tepeh dive*, or the Devil's mountain, a high rocky, and apparently inaccessible height, reared its head in mysterious and shadowy grandeur, unadorned by trees or vegetation of any kind, and crowned by ramparts of broken and irregular outline. This was the castle and residence of Cara Bey. On the

other side, towards the east, the country was intersected by small volcanic-looking hills, equally bare of vegetation, presenting a succession of dreary wastes and unappropriated land, and apparently of ~~no~~ use to man but as forming an excellent frontier-boundary between two inland states.

These hills, varying in size and form, gradually increased into mountains, and at length seemed lost in the great chain which swept all round the horizon, rearing its principal height in the two cones of Aligez, and arrested in its progress to the south by the intervention of the fertile and magnificent plain of Erivan, and its opposite mountains of Ararat. Nothing was yet seen of the point upon which Cara Bey was directing his force. The men marched in silence, every now and then casting their eyes forward, anxious to discover what they were about to attack; whilst their chief, confident in himself, rode on as if he were

perfectly aware of his position. Osmond kept close in his rear, and finding that he was narrowly watched, refrained from speaking, although he willingly would have held communication with Mustafa and Stasso. Hassan, busily employed in keeping the men together, was seen sometimes a-head on the look-out, at other times speaking to the chief, and again in the rear, giving orders, and holding out encouragement.

By this time the dawn had given way to the broad glare of day; the East was making preparations to receive the sun, and the crags of the robber's castle began to be brought out in strong relief, and to show their rugged and inaccessible strength. After having passed an angular projection of volcanic ground, on a sudden the whole party came in sight of a ravine, on the opposite side of which might be discerned the low and ill-defined houses of a village. This was the advanced post of

the Russians on this part of the Turkish frontier, and the point which it was Cara Bey's object to attack and seize.

In order to take every advantage of the deep shade with which this side of the ravine was still overspread, the chief, in descending, put his troop into rapid motion, hoping to reach his destination unobserved, and thus to take the garrison by surprise. But, before he reached the bottom in order to ford a small stream which flowed through it, he was enraged by hearing a long shrill cry from the sentinel on guard, accompanied by a shot, which so effectually roused the little garrison, that, before the invaders could reach the opposite side, they had the mortification to behold a well-formed line of infantry, their arms clashing, and their bayonets glittering in the morning light, ready to receive them. Without a moment's delay, Cara Bey ordered a general charge; and every man was about giving full impetus to his horse, whilst he drew his

sabre from its scabbard, when a discharge from the whole line at once stopped their progress, and apparently defeated his purpose. There he stood, foiled and enraged! His eyes glared with fury; he would have laid the blame upon every one but himself: he looked towards Osmond with a suspicious and frenzied look; then he cast his eyes upon Mustafa, then upon Stasso. He had not discovered that which was really the case—that when the invading troop passed the crest of the ravine, they had cut the clear sky with their moving line, and consequently were plainly seen by the sentinel; he chose rather to believe that there was treachery in the wind. All his evil passions were immediately alive. He said nothing at the moment, but was evidently collecting his wits in order to determine what course he ought to pursue. He was not a man to retreat without striking some blow. He looked around to discover what might be done, and immediately determined to at-

tempt an attack by spreading his horsemen on all sides of the opposing line.

This movement was soon observed by the Russians, who, advancing into a more open space, formed themselves into a hollow square, and there awaited the attack. Cara Bey had seen this manœuvre performed upon a former occasion, and therefore knew how hopeless his attempts would be to make any impression upon them. Again he remained perfectly perplexed. His anger now broke out with fury; he turned to Osmond, and, with the most taunting expressions, enquired from him what the Franks intended by this position of their forces, and hinted that, but for the unlucky presence of strangers, it might have been otherwise. He then turned to his woe-begone looking priest, who rode at his side, and with fury in his aspect asked him what he meant by leading him to undertake so disastrous an expedition.

Just at this juncture, an officer, accompanied

by several others, was seen to issue from the ranks of the Russians, and to take up a position on an adjacent mound, in order to acquire a clearer view of the enemy; and this was done evidently by way of bravado, as well as to show his contempt of the invading force. He was a small slim youth, tightly compressed in the waist, according to the Russian fashion, wearing a large cocked-hat with feathers, whilst he held in his hand a small sword for his only defence; the others were inferior officers, who wore small cloth-caps. As they came in view, presenting as they did so fair a mark, every horseman who bore a rifle, instantly slipped it from the sling, and commenced a desultory fire upon them. But, although the balls fell thick about them, they valiantly kept their ground, and, regardless of danger, did not appear at all disposed to retire from their position.

Cara Bey instantly saw how easy it would be to make them prisoners, and without loss of

time ordered a detachment of some of his chosen men to make a circuit in order to cut them off from the main body. Then turning to Osmond, he said, "Now, Sir Frank, let me see what you can do,—let me see whether you be a true man or not: go, my eyes are upon you." Osmond would willingly have kept aloof from the fray, but feeling that he might, perhaps, be instrumental in saving life, and preventing the effusion of blood, and aware, moreover, in how critical a situation he was himself placed, he at once joined the party. Mounted upon a Kurdish horse of great power and speed, he altogether looked as complete an Asiatic as his companions; but he was aware of being strictly watched, and although the thought might have flashed across his mind that he now had an opportunity of escaping, yet he instantly rejected the temptation when he reflected that, by so doing, not only would he deliver up his two followers to certain destruc-

tion, but also be making a sacrifice of his honour, although it was only to a barbarian, who had none.

The ground happened to be so broken that the detached party found no difficulty in putting their chieftain's scheme into execution. Gradually gliding behind the condensed troop, they dropped into a small ravine, which led by a succession of projecting banks, emanating from the mound upon which the officers had taken post; then, carefully concealing themselves, they made a long circuit, until they came close upon the Russians; when, rushing at once to the spot which intervened between the troops and their officers, they succeeded in making the attack just as the latter were retreating into the hollow square. All secured their retreat excepting the principal officer, the youth before-mentioned; who, whether from pride or contempt of his enemy, chose to betray no haste in his motions, and walked almost leisurely towards his com-

pany. A fire had opened from one side of the square upon the advancing horsemen, which had the effect of stopping their career; three of the bravest, however, would not allow their ardour to be checked, but made at once for the young officer, with the intention of putting him to death. Sword in hand, they flew at him. Perceiving his fate, and that he was cut off from his companions, he stood to defend himself; he parried one man's thrust with success, another was about cutting him down, when Osmond, who had followed the three, drove his horse between the combatants, received the blow that was intended for the officer on his own sword, and then throwing it by the sling on his wrist, thrust forward his hand, seized the youth by the collar, and with that grasp which the great strength of his arm enabled him to accomplish, carried him off, half-dragging, half-running, to Cara Bey, and did not stop until he had reached his very stirrup. During this occurrence, which was performed with breathless

rapidity, the young Russian roared out to his troops to fire. Their astonishment at what had taken place was such that they lost all presence of mind, for they neither heard nor heeded his command; and it was only when perceiving their officer thus carried away, that it occurred to them to fire: had they done so at first, probably they would have annihilated Osmond, officer and all; but they fired too late to produce any effect, and nobody was hurt.

Osmond's feat had been so instantaneous, and executed with so much skill and bravery, that Cara Bey and his men could scarcely believe their senses when they saw him appear officer in hand.

“*Aferin! Aferin! Frangi!* — Well done, Frank!” broke out from the mouths of those who had witnessed the scene. Cara Bey, in particular, appeared charmed; he extolled Osmond's bravery; called him “*Gardash* — brother!” all his suspicions appeared from that moment to have vanished, and he took

him into especial favour. Much time, however, could not be taken up in admiration; for the Russians, finding that their officer was now a prisoner, made a movement in advance, in the hope of releasing him; but Cara Bey, satisfied with what had been done, and foreseeing that such a prize might further his views, ordered a rapid retreat to his castle.

Tying the unfortunate prisoner's hands behind his back, and blindfolding his eyes, they mounted him behind a trooper, and carried him off at so quick a pace, that it was impossible for the soldiers to overtake him. During this operation, which was conducted under the direction of Hassan, Osmond stood near, to see that he was treated with as little roughness as possible. The youth bore his misfortune with the fortitude of a hero; and although Osmond's heart smote him when he saw the horrors of the situation in which he had been the means of placing him, still, he was consoled by the reflection that he had also been the means

.

of saving him from certain death. The barbarians would have drunk his blood, so incensed were they at the failure of their enterprise; for they had anticipated booty of all sorts, and licentious revelry for several days; but Osmond had interested Hassan in his behalf, and he, at this dangerous crisis, protected him.

Osmond perceived at once that the prisoner was a well-born youth; his manners were remarkably good, and his whole appearance prepossessing. He would have given the world to have talked to him—to have comforted him with hope of deliverance, to have consoled him by the assurance that he had a friend and protector at hand; but so fearful was he of committing himself and giving rise to suspicions, that he refrained, although he was determined at the first fitting opportunity to open himself to him.

The whole party hastened onwards to the castle. There were two roads; the one which

led to the principal entrance, was long and of no very difficult ascent — the other was shorter, a secret path, of the most rugged nature, and only taken upon particular occasions. When they had reached the spot where the two roads parted, Cara Bey collected a small detachment, the command of which he took to himself, in order to conduct the prisoner by the shortest road, whilst he ordered Hassan to take charge of the main body.

At the same time he directed Osmond and his servants to follow the prisoner, giving some directions to Hassan, which were inaudible to the rest of the party. They commenced the ascent on horseback, but it soon became too difficult for the footing of their steeds, and they were obliged to dismount and lead them. The horse upon which the young officer was mounted was forced up the steep path in spite of every impediment, for the bandage was not allowed to be taken from his eyes. Osmond, who occasionally walk-

ed at his side, watched the countenance of the prisoner, who appeared absorbed in the contemplation of the misfortune which had overtaken him. A tear trickled down his cheek. This spoke volumes ; he was, perhaps, wrapped up in the recollection of some tender parent or some dear friend, lost to him, as he felt, for ever ; or he might be deploring his rashness in having thus foolishly hazarded his liberty, and perhaps his life, whilst he had forgotten his duty as an officer ; or he might be regretting the loss of his prospects in his profession, and contemplating the horrors of imprisonment in the hands of a ruthless barbarian. Osmond could no longer withstand the feeling of pity which sprang in his heart at this sight. He had observed that the youth could not explain himself, and did not understand one word of the Turkish language ; his exclamations and whatever he attempted to say being in Russian ; but, from his appearance, he presumed that he must talk French ; and, overlooking every other con-

sideration, he said to him in a low voice, as he walked by his side, "Do not be disheartened ; you have a friend here who will watch over your safety."

An electric shock could not have acted more violently than these words upon the frame of the young officer. "Speak again, whoever you are !" he exclaimed in very good French ; "in the name of Heaven, tell me who you are !"

"Hush !" said Osmond ; "say no more—we are watched. Again I say, do not despair— all will be well !"

Cara Bey, whose ears were open to every sound, as his thoughts were awake to every emergency, heard the Russian's voice, and immediately exclaimed, "What does the dog say ?"

Osmond answered, "As you would obtain mercy, show mercy to your prisoner."

"Mercy ! mercy, indeed !" shouted the other in savage exultation ; "Do you see that eagle ?" said he, as he pointed to one perched on the

summit of a conspicuous rock—"does he show mercy? Cara Bey learns how to war from the eagle. Look up to yonder castle;—we do not keep that as a house of pleasure for such dogs as this! Where did you learn the trade of a soldier?"

"The trade of a soldier," replied Osmond, "does not prevent me from having the feelings of a man. In my country, when we go to war, it is with states, and not with individuals."

"Oh!" exclaimed Cara Bey, "you are one of those mad Franks who esteem yourselves wiser than other people; wait till you reach yon walls, and you will learn other things."

This conversation took place during the labours of a severe ascent, in broken words, spoken between the heavings of the breath caused by violent exertion.

Mustafa and Stasso followed close in the rear of Osmond, and lent a greedy ear to all that passed: the former trembled at the prospect of being immured within the castle; whilst

the latter took the most attentive survey of every turn of the path, of every rock and stone, of the direction of surrounding objects, and particularly of the exact position of the Russian post, in the hope of one day being enabled to profit by it.

At length the whole party reached the summit of the mountain, and touched the very base of the castle walls. In turning back to survey the path which they had taken, it was evident that none but those who were thoroughly practised, could ever find their way up, or discover the small gate, which was secreted within a projection: through this they now made their entrance. As soon as the gate was closed, and carefully locked and bolted, Cara Bey ordered the bandage to be taken from the eyes of his prisoner, who was then led forward, through a long narrow passage, into a room of sufficiently large dimensions. His first impulse was to look around and discover, if possible, the person who had spoken

to him ; but seeing none but Asiatics, for all traces of the European were lost in Osmond's complete disguise, he began to fancy that the words which he had heard addressed to him in French, were only the work of his imagination. He discovered in Osmond the man who had saved his life and made him prisoner, and therefore eyed him with peculiar interest. He would have addressed himself to the chief ; but, instead of being allowed an opportunity of making a remonstrance, to his surprise and indignation he was rudely seized upon by two ruffians, who, putting a rope round his breast and under the arms, forcibly urged him towards a trap-door, which was concealed by matting, and, notwithstanding his struggles, violently obliged him to descend into a deep well, to the bottom of which, by the help of the rope, they gradually lowered him. At the sight of this indignity, Osmond turned round to remonstrate with Cara Bey, but, to his surprise, he was gone, and, what was still more

extraordinary, the door, which evidently led into the other part of the castle, was closed upon him by the two ruffians as they left the room, and thus he found that, with Mustafa and Stasso, he actually remained a prisoner also.

The person who received the first burst of his indignation, the appointed jailor, was an old Turk, of a placid and benign aspect, whose looks of sympathy spoke him to be an unwilling witness to such infamy. “How is this, O man?” exclaimed Osmond: “am I also your prisoner? Is not your Bey already sufficiently a tyrant and a traitor, that he must add this act to his barbarity? The poorest Arab will receive his guest with hospitality, and, though laden with gold, would scorn to rob him as long as he is under his roof. I came to your master for protection; he pretends to grant it, but cheats me out of my liberty. Speak! are you a party concerned in this act of treachery?”

“ *Ne apalum*—what can I say?” said the old man, shrugging up his shoulders. “ If you have not known our Bey before, you know him now. I am under authority ; I grieve for you, but cannot help you.”

“ Where is Hassan, his kiaya? Surely there must be some mistake,” said Osmond.

“ He is one big rogue too,” said Mustafa, in some measure consoled by his master’s misfortune in finding his predictions about to be realized. “ Did I not tell you, that you do not know these fellows? They are now laughing at our beards, and calling out ‘ *Ba ! ba !*—see what clever fellows we are to trick this Frank !’ Ah, why did you ever come here ?”

Stasso’s rage was not less than his master’s ; his first impulse was to endeavour to escape, and he began to try the strength of the doors, when he was stopped by the good-natured expostulations of old Mahmoud, who said, “ My son, cease your endeavours ; they will avail nothing, they will only lead you yonder,”

pointing to the well ; “ remain where you are, and be content.”

Osmond could not bring himself to believe it was really intended that he should continue a prisoner, for, referring to the whole of Hassan’s conduct, from his release to the time he delivered him over to Cara Bey, he could not discover what advantage could be obtained by keeping him in confinement. He was too poor to be an object of plunder, and, if it were intended to enroll him among his followers, wherefore keep him a prisoner? However, it was impossible to argue from the conduct of others to what might be the views of Cara Bey, who was evidently a wretch swayed by jealousy, caprice, suspicion, or fifty other feelings unknown to Osmond. He consoled himself by the reflection that he had at least been the means of saving a man’s life ; and a small still voice within would further tell him, that to this incident, which now appeared so disastrous in his eyes,

would be owing his emancipation from all his miseries. With this feeling he approached the mouth of the well, and, with the permission of the old jailor, who lifted up the trap-door for the purpose, accosted the young Russian.

The words which he uttered fell in cheering accents upon the ears of the unfortunate youth as the first indications of help act upon the feelings of a lost and benighted traveller; a thrill of transport ran through his frame, and, with tears of gratitude in his eyes, he exclaimed, "For the love of God, tell me who you are?"

"I am a prisoner like yourself," answered Osmond, "though not so ill off as you: we are both in the hands of a villain; but let us take courage, and trust to God for our deliverance."

This opening led to a free and frank communication between them, in which Osmond gave a full account of himself, and of the manner in which he had fallen into his present

predicament, which was followed on the part of the Russian by a narrative of his own history and adventures. Osmond thought it right to inform him that he was the man who had, in fact; deprived him of his liberty; but that, distressed as he was at the result of his feat, still he could not help congratulating himself upon it, as he thereby had been the means of saving his life. And he added, that nothing should be left untried by him, were he to regain his own freedom, to endeavour to make up for the violence which he had been obliged to exercise, by exertions in his favour. However enraged the Russian might have been at the time to find himself carried off in so unceremonious a manner in the very face of his own troops, yet, when he found that he who had made him prisoner had also saved his life, he allowed his feelings of gratitude to predominate, and almost forgot what had passed, in the charm of hearing the voice of a friend when he was about

to abandon himself to despair. He informed Osmond that he belonged to a noble family in his own country; that his name was Ivanovitch; and that, owing to some juvenile indiscretion in his corps, he had been exiled for two years to this distant station. He described the hole in which he was now confined, as a sort of dry well or cistern cut into the rock, some thirty feet under ground, six feet long and five wide, receiving no other light and air than that which a narrow embrasure cut into the summit of the wall could admit. It contained neither bed nor seat. A little straw and a small earthen vessel placed in a corner, was all that he had found for his convenience; and he added, by way of a hint of what his fate might be, that he had discovered a newly-dug grave. This Osmond found, upon inquiry from the old jailor, contained the remains of a Bey, who had recently been put to death by Cara Bey.

“Allah! Allah!” exclaimed Mustafa, upon

hearing this piece of information, his teeth chattering with fear and his face assuming the colour of death,—“why did we ever leave Kars? What ashes are fallen upon our heads! Better to have eaten stick among the Turks, than to be buried in a hole by these devil-worshippers.”

“Patience, my soul!” quietly enjoined the benign jailor. “Do we know what is good or bad for us? If it be your destiny to be buried in a hole, wherefore grieve? Say ‘Praise be to Allah!’ whatever may happen. I am a Mussulman as well as you; and these grey hairs of mine” (touching his beard at the same time) “have witnessed more misfortunes than ever your chin has seen; and still I say, ‘Praise be to Allah!’”

“And so you may, if you choose, and welcome,” retorted Mustafa; “but will that make me a bit less a prisoner? This man is an English *beyzadeh*—a lord’s son; what has he to do with your devil-worshippers? I am his

servant, what have I to do with them ?” Then taking up a plaintive tone, he entreated him, saying, “ Go, Mahmoud Aga, as you love your soul ! go, tell your chief, that it is not the custom to make English beyzadehs, who are friends of his government and country, prisoners, and to treat them as enemies. As for the Moscovs, well, do what you like with them ; but with us the case is different.”

Long and various were the consultations between Osmond and Ivanovitch, between Mustafa and Stasso, and between them all and the old jailor, ere they made up their minds to pass the night in their present state of misery ; but there seemed to be no help for it. None but the most ordinary food was brought to them, and they slept upon the bare boards. The abject fear and awe in which every one stood of Cara Bey, prevented any appeal to him. No one dared venture to remonstrate after he had once given an order ; and, to all appearance, his resolves concerning Osmond

and his servants were final. As for the unfortunate Ivanovitch, whether buried alive in the depth of the well, or buried a corpse in the bowels of the earth, to the inmates of the castle it seemed to be one and the same thing, and no one cared or thought more about him. But, however much he was to be pitied, Osmond was in fact still more an object of compassion ; for, when left to himself, his mind was principally absorbed in contemplating the possibility of the threat which Cara Bey had uttered of seizing Ayesha. The more he dwelt upon that thought, the more he felt the utter misery and helplessness of his present situation. If the tyrant really meant to put his infernal scheme into execution, Osmond's only hope was that his services might be required, for then he might perhaps either frustrate the scheme altogether, or, if she were unfortunate enough to fall into the tyrant's hands, protect her, or, if he could not protect her, die in the attempt. When his imagination

carried him on to the maddening thought of seeing one so fair and so innocent exposed to the rude insults of the monster, his senses almost forsook him, whilst his blood boiled with the fire of his indignation. He groaned with mental agony,—all his own cares were lost in this one absorbing thought, and as sleep forsook his eyelids, so the miseries which he endured gradually wasted his strength, and produced a baneful effect upon his person.

CHAPTER VI.

Entre les sectes nombreuses qui se sont élevées dans la Mesopotamie, il n'en est aucune qui soit odieuse à toutes les autres autant que celle des Yezidis.

Notice sur les Yezidis, par le Père Maurice Garzoni.

THE Yezidies, or the worshippers of Satan, as they are frequently called, are one of the numerous sects which were formed in Mesopotamia, among the Mussulmans, after the death of their Prophet, and extended themselves more particularly among that ancient people the Kurds. They constitute a curious chapter in the history of man. Their founder was Sheikh Yezid, the declared enemy of the family of Ali. The doctrine they profess is a mixture of Manichæism, Mahomedanism, and the religion of the

ancient Persians. It is preserved by oral tradition, reading and writing not being allowed among them.

By the true believers they are looked upon as accursed; their name is synonymous with blasphemers, barbarians, and men of blood. Owing to the want of written records, it is very difficult to procure any accurate information concerning them, as they preserve great secrecy in matters of religion. The general report is, that the first principle of the Yezidies is to insure the friendship of the Devil, and to defend his interests by the sword. They never mention his name, and even adopt all sorts of circumlocution rather than pronounce any word or sound which expresses it. Whoever approaches their habitation must be careful not to pronounce the word *shaitan* and *lahnet*—devil and accursed, for fear of being ill-treated, or even put to death. The evil spirit has no precise name in their language. They designate him as the Sheikh Māzen, or the great

chief. They admit of the prophets and the saints revered by Christians, and respect the monasteries bearing their names, situated within their territories. They believe that all such holy personages, when they lived on the earth, were more or less distinguished according as the Devil was pleased to notice them. In a word, they affirm that it is God who ordains, but that he delivers over the execution of his orders to the Devil. In the morning, as soon as the sun appears, they fall on their knees, their feet being naked, with their faces towards that luminary, and worship him, touching the ground with their foreheads; and this they do in all secrecy. They keep no fasts and say no prayers, and, to justify this omission, they assert that their Sheikh Yezid has in his own person made sufficient atonement until the end of the world, that he received a positive assurance of this in the revelations made to him, and that therefore it is prohibited to them to learn to read and write. Nevertheless, every chief of a tribe,

and all large villages, pay a Mahomedan scribe to read any letters which may be received from Turks and men in authority. Whatever regards their own immediate concerns is always performed by word of mouth, conveyed by messengers of their own sect.

Without prayers, without fasts, without rites, they have no religious festivals, except one, on the 10th of August, when they assemble in great numbers in the neighbourhood of Sheikh Adi. At that time many Yezidies come from the most distant points; the festival lasts all that day and the night following; and during their passage to the place of congregation, they do not scruple to rob and plunder. Married women go in numbers to the surrounding villages; and on that night, it is said, after having eaten and drunk their fill, the lights are extinguished, and nothing more is said until the morning. They eat everything without discrimination, except lettuce and pumpkins; they only bake barley bread. They use in-

discriminately the same form of oaths as Turks, Christians, and Jews, but their great oath is “By the standard of Yezid !”

The Yezidies recognise for the chief of their religion, the Sheikh who governs the tribe, to whom is confided the care of the tomb of Adi, the restorer of their sect. This tomb is in the jurisdiction of the governor of Amadiyah. The chief of this tribe must always be chosen from among the descendants of Yezid. The respect which is paid him by his adherents is such, that they are charmed if they can obtain one of his old shirts as a winding-sheet; they think that they shall be well off in the next world with such an appendage: some zealots will even give forty piastres for such a relic—a remnant suffices, if they cannot procure a whole shirt. When he wishes to confer a peculiar favour, he sends an old shirt as a present. The Yezidies convey to him secretly a portion of their robbery and plunder, by way of indemnification

for the hospitality he exercises towards the individuals of his own sect.

The chief of the Yezidies always keeps near him another personage, who is called Kotchek, and without whose advice he does not venture to do anything. This man is looked upon as the oracle of the chief, because he is said to enjoy the privilege of being the immediate recipient of the Devil's communications. When any Yezidi is in doubt whether he should engage in an important affair or not, he seeks the advice of the Kotchek, which, however, is not given to him without a consideration. Before the Kotchek affords his advice, in order to give the utmost weight to his answer, he extends himself at full-length on the ground, and covering himself over, he either sleeps, or pretends to sleep, after which he communicates what has been revealed to him, and the decision is made. Sometimes, he takes a long while to consider.

The following fact will serve to show the

influence which such a personage possesses. Many years ago, the women of the Yezidies, like those of the Arabs, in order to save soap, wore dark blue chemises, dyed with indigo. One morning, when it was least expected, the Kōtchek appeared before the chief of his sect, and announced, that it had been revealed to him during the preceding night, that blue was a colour which brought ill-luck, and was held in abhorrence by the Devil. Nothing more was necessary to cause express messengers to be sent to the various tribes with an order, that blue was for the future an unpermitted colour, that all clothes of that colour were to be destroyed, and that white, for the future, was to be adopted. This order has been adhered to with such great exactitude, that if at this day a Yezidi, living with a Turk or a Christian, was to find upon his bed a blue coverlet, he would sleep in his own white clothes, and perish with cold, rather than use it.

The Yezidies, as a race, are one of the most cruel and sanguinary that are known in Asia ; for it is generally reported of them that in war, particularly in their petty differences with the Turks, whenever they make prisoners, they give no quarter, but put every one to death without discrimination. At the same time they are the greatest moral dastards and cowards, because, according as their interest may impel them, they do not hesitate to call themselves Mahomedans, Christians, or Jews, as may best suit their purpose at the moment. They pretend to hold in great veneration the Koran, the Gospel, the books of Moses, and the Psalms ; and although they may be convicted of being Yezidies, yet they swear through thick and thin that they are not, and, for the time being, abjure their real faith.

This sketch of the extraordinary race may give the reader some idea of the wretches into whose hands Osmond had fallen. Cara Bey deserved the reputation which he had

acquired, of being a Yezidi of the most sanguinary character. He was tolerated by the Grand Signor, as were others of his sect, because, according to the opinions of Mahomedan doctors, expounders of the law, every man is considered a true believer who will make a profession of the fundamental doctrines of Islam, namely, “That there is no other God than God, and that Mahomet is the Prophet of God,” although he fails in the practice of all the other precepts of the Koran. Cara Bey made no difficulty in making this profession, and, when in presence of Mahomedans, in keeping up the semblance of being one of them; but, at the same time, he made no scruple in putting them to death, whenever he could do so with impunity; and indeed, according to the principles of his own creed, he believed that in so doing he performed an action which was full of merit in the eyes of his great Sheikh—that is, the Devil.

It was said that Cara Bey, before he ac-

quired his present eminence, had been executioner in the service of the governor of Ahmadiyah ; and that, in consequence of the number of Turkish heads which he had cut off, he was held in proportionably great veneration by his own sectaries, who, when they approached him, were wont to kiss his hands, sanctified, so they esteemed them to be, by the blood of Turks. But the secret of his security in power and the possession of his stronghold was said to be the protection of the Capidan Pasha at the Porte, which he had purchased at a great price, and which he continued to enjoy by pouring into the coffers of that great officer an annual tribute in gold to some considerable amount. Thus protected, he bade defiance to the efforts of the Pasha of Kars, or any other of the Turkish neighbouring local authorities, against him, and continued, almost uncontrolled, to be the terror of the traveller, and of caravans, as well as of the country round about.

His castle was one of those structures frequently seen in Armenia, crowning the summit of detached hills, apparently of the same date and architecture as the city of Anni ; and was evidently adopted by the Turks, in their first inroads from the East, as a frontier fortress. Its outer walls were intersected at intervals by square turrets, indented with embrasures. The building consisted of a court, entered by massive gates, which led into suites of rooms, lower and upper : the lower were appropriated to offices and stables, the upper to the habitation of the chief. On a detached rock, communicating by a narrow wooden bridge to the main building, stood a square fort or keep, which formed the prison in which Osmond and the young Russian were confined. The whole was strong by its position, well calculated to resist any attack that might be made upon it by Asiatic troops, but not proof against artillery.

Cara Bey's own apartment was situated in

such a manner as to command a view of the adjacent country, extending towards the plain of Erivan, watered by the Arpachai, and terminated by the magnificent mountains, of which the great cone of Ararat, with its minor summit, formed the principal features. Here, seated on his silken cushions, and his windows open to every breeze, did he pass a great portion of his time when he was not abroad as a freebooter, telescope in hand, scrutinizing objects far and near; his eye principally fixed upon a tract of the high caravan road from Persia into Turkey. From this room into his harem, which consisted of a low set of apartments, the small windows of which looked immediately upon the walls of the prison, there was an immediate access by means of a narrow and intricate passage. Here lived, in a state of miserable bondage, several unfortunate women, who were kept, like puppets, in a box, for the sole purpose of administering to his pleasures. One among them was dignified

with the title of “Kadun,” and bore a certain preeminence over the rest, who were called her slaves: but hers was but a poor superiority, deprived as she was, in common with the others, of the advantages of air, liberty, and converse with her fellow-creatures. Cara Bey’s licentiousness knew no bounds. Frequently had he undertaken predatory excursions for the sole purpose of seizing upon some unfortunate maiden, whose reputation for beauty had excited his evil passions, attacked the village in which she lived, and carried her forcibly away from her parents, perhaps amid the ruins of their habitation, and after the horrors of murder and pillage committed by his sanguinary gang.

The constant suspicion in which he lived of those around him, was the cause of his determination to place Osmond and his servants in confinement. He was too well aware of the state of things at Constantinople, of the power exercised by European ambassa-

dors there in the protection of the subjects of their country, and of the investigations likely to be set on foot in case of their loss or abduction, not to feel that, were it known that he had been the means of destroying an Englishman, and one of consequence, as in the present instance, not all the protection which the Capidan Pasha could afford him, nor all the money which he might expend, could eventually secure him from molestation. His ulterior object, therefore, was not Osmond's destruction; and he adopted the half-measure, between plunging him into Ivanovitch's well, and leaving him full liberty to range the castle at large, — that of simple confinement in a room.

This arrangement, however satisfactory it might be to himself, was not at all so to Hassan, his kiaya; who, really attached to Osmond from gratitude and from admiration of his high qualities, deplored in his heart the treatment which he had met with. The

constant fear in which he lived of his ferocious master, prevented him from speaking his mind boldly ; but it was evident, from his dull and downcast looks, from the loss of his energetic manner, and from the few words which he spoke when addressed, that the situation of his friend and deliverer, a situation in which he had been the means of placing him, was a subject which weighed him down with sorrow.

“ *Ne oldou, pezevenk ?* — What has happened, fellow ?” exclaimed Cara Bey to him, the day after they returned from their last expedition. “ Are you become an owl, or a camel, or, what is worse, a Turkish dog, that you go moping about as if the day of judgment were at hand ? What ails thee, man ?”

“ *Bir chey yok !* — There is nothing !” answered the other, stroking his great mustaches down as he spoke, sighing the while, and looking like a condemned malefactor.

“ Nothing ! say you ? Then wherefore so *kief’ siz* — so spiritless ? Look ! you know

Cara Bey ! He is not apt to take bad jokes. By the standard of Yezid ! I swear, and, what is more, by this whisker !” touching the tip of his own as he spoke, “if you do not put off this piece of fool’s play, and go about your duties like a good servant, I will make your soul jump out of that carcase of yours ! Have you heard me ?”

“ You are the master to do as you please,” said the other doggedly.

“ Speak then !” said Cara Bey : “ speak ; let us see. Are you not clothed sumptuously ? Are you not fed well ? Have you not the choicest horses in my stable at your command ? Next to myself, have you not more authority than any other in the castle ? For what then can you wish ? If you want my musnud too, and my seals,” added he mockingly, “ Bismillah ! here, Sir Bey, come hither, sit, eat, drink, kill, rob, riot ; what more can you want ?”

“ What does my lord say ?” answered Hassan, with less sullenness and more confidence.

“ I am a poor man, and his slave. Praises be to Allah ! I have everything at command from your bounty. You have done everything for me except one.”

“ *Ne var* — What is that ?” said Cara Bey, his countenance taking that look which may be called the true satanic—a scowl on the brow and a smile on the lip. “ What do you want ?”

“ You have not done me justice,” said Hasan meekly ; “ I want justice.”

“ Justice !” exclaimed the other, breaking into a fiendish laugh. “ Mashallah ! how long have you become a mollah ? You shall be made mufti of this castle, and with a great green caouk on your head, as large as Aligez yonder, you shall for the future dispense justice from the bench, instead of taking your pleasure on the saddle. Justice, eh !”

“ You are the master,” said the other, “ but, in truth, my soul is sick—our honour is gone.”

“ Man ! are you run mad ?” exclaimed Cara Bey in astonishment ; “ first you want justice,

then your honour is gone: what words are these? Do I care for justice? Do I pine for my honour? If I do not, wherefore should you? —you, who only shine by reflection! Go go, you are run mad.”

“If such be the case, then,” said Hassan, with great apparent feeling, “allow me to lay down my place of kiaya, and to return to that of one of your guard. My arms, my legs are broken; I can do nothing more than desire death, which I will seek on the first opportunity.”

At these words Cara Bey answered nothing, but appeared for a moment in deep thought, although it was evident that passion, and that of the direst nature, was working in his breast. At last he said, “What do you require? Speak! I command you.”

“The Frank whom you have confined,” said Hassan boldly, “has saved my life twice. I brought him to you upon the faith of receiving your protection; you have broken

that faith. I ask you to release him, and this head of mine answers for his conduct."

At these words the whole demon broke forth in the person of Cara Bey. The obliquity as well as the brilliancy of his eyes combined, became horrible to behold; his white livid countenance was streaked with blue; his black hair exhibited a tendency to distension: he clenched his hands; he half-rose from his seat: his throat seemed too small for the utterance of his words. At length they came out, streaming with blasphemy and violence, as the first black volume of smoke issues from the chimney of a furnace before the coal has ignited! "Dog! rogue! ill-born! asses' colt!" first came from his lips; then, "I'll sell your mother. Shall I not do what I please with my own prisoners, and in my own castle? Shall I look to you for dictation? Dog! I'll destroy your father—a dog is too good for your parent." All this poured forth in such rapid succession that there was no interval between one gradation of abuse

.

and another ; until hoarseness overtook him, when he at length roared out for the inflictors of his cruelty to appear, and immediately ordered the too faithful Hassan to receive an untold bastinado on the soles of his feet. It was with difficulty that he restrained himself from ordering instant death, but the services of the offender were too well known and too valuable to him to be thus lost, and self-interest stepped in to allay the violence of his mad fury. The poor creature suffered without a groan, and was at length carried away in a state of total insensibility ; his feet were beaten into a shapeless mass ; the pain which he had undergone had almost caused his eyes to start from his head, whilst his parched mouth became black with darkened blood.

The fiend who had thus treated his faithful servant, would probably have made his vengeance fall upon the head of Osmond as well, but he was luckily brought to his more sober senses by the reflection that he had deprived himself

of Hassan's services when they would be of eminent use in a certain expedition which he had planned, and which he was anxious to put into execution without loss of time. This was the scheme which he had hinted to Osmond at their first interview—namely, that of bearing away Ayesha by force, and adopting her as the future queen of his harem. Such were the repeated accounts which had come to his ears of her extraordinary beauty and merit, and so much had his curiosity been raised after all that had taken place at Kars between her and Osmond, that his only thought was how he could obtain possession of her. This he turned over in his mind in every possible manner, viewing it in every light, and mad to undertake it, although he saw it fraught with difficulty. With Hassan's activity, bravery, and sagacity, he felt that he should be certain of success; but now that he had deprived himself of these helps for some time, he was almost on the point of knocking his head against the

wall for having allowed his passion thus to overcome his better reason. But, in order to ease his mind of its present embarrassed state in regard to the expedition which he had in view, he sent for his Kotchek, or priest, the doleful-looking person whom we have before noticed, and ordered him to acquire some certain information whether the project which he contemplated, and which he explained to him, would meet with success or not. Cara Bey, who had in some measure arrogated to himself the dignity of being the head of the Yezidies, chose to adopt the privilege belonging to their real head, of keeping a Kotchek ; and thus he felt his mind steeled against the iniquity of his horrid achievements, flattering himself that the responsibility lay at the door of the priest who sanctioned them.

The Kotchek, upon hearing the magnitude of the scheme, shook his head as if to say that it would be too difficult to accomplish ; but as soon as he perceived the rising impatience of

his chief, he began to fear that, if he refused his sanction, it might be the worse for him. Straightway he proceeded to business. — He first covered himself over with a large black cloak, and his head with a dark shawl; he then ensconced himself in the corner of a quiet room, where he extended his person at full-length on the floor. No one was permitted to disturb him on pain of punishment. There he lay, apparently torpid, waiting for a revelation from the Devil; but so long did he remain in this state, that Cara Bey would every now and then steal into the room where he lay, and give him a monitory kick by way of hastening his operations. At length he arose, and with many hypocritical manifestations of having received a full and true communication, announced to his vivacious master that he might proceed in full surety of being successful, provided he crossed the threshold of his castle with his left leg foremost; and provided that he, the priest, received certain measures of rice, and of butter,

and a good fat lamb, on the very day of the return of the expedition. Moreover, he warned him, as he valued his life, not to omit putting on, next to his skin, the old shirt which had lately been sent him from the great Sheikh of their tribe; and particularly not to wear it inside out, for much of his safety depended upon that.

Cara Bey announced himself well pleased with his priest's decision, and assured him, that not only would he bestow upon him the desired donation of rice and lamb, but that, on the day after his return, he would give a plentiful feast of pillau to his whole establishment and garrison.

Having said this, he immediately turned his mind to planning the expedition; and first, he thought it necessary to obtain from Hassan, who was better acquainted with the localities of Kars than any other man in the garrison, every information as to the best time and mode of attack. He did not cease upbraiding him-

self with want of foresight in having thus deprived himself of his services at a moment when they were most wanted, but still cherished the hope that, with proper remedies, he might sufficiently patch up his lacerated feet to enable him to be of the party. He proceeded to visit the poor man, who lay in agony, groaning with the pain of his wounds, and restless with feverish excitement. As he approached his bed, he assumed a voice of great interest and condolence, assuring him of his sorrow at seeing him in this state, and of his desire to ensure his recovery. He recommended that he should be removed into his own harem, where the women should take charge of him and watch over his recovery ; and as a warrant of his good intentions, immediately ordered the change to be made. By the help of two men, under the direction of their chief in person, he was conducted from his own dark lodging into a small closet immediately at the entrance of the women's apartments, where he

was deposited on a soft bed, propped up with pillows, and treated with the same comforts which the Bey himself would have commanded.

Hassan allowed all this to be done for him, and received the attentions of his chief with every appearance of thankfulness; but his heart was not moved. He had been most cruelly treated: his fidelity was overlooked, and his services unheeded; he felt that he had been treated like the commonest menial. He had determined never to forgive this conduct. Although a marauder and a robber, yet his nature was full of gratitude, and having once received benefits, he never forgot them: but he was also revengeful; and being full of intelligence and resources, his hatred became dangerous. That feeling now was predominant in his breast, and Cara Bey was its object. The only relief which he enjoyed as he lay writhing on his bed of pain, was the contemplation of future revenge. He was universally beloved by the garrison, and was

looked up to with great respect, on account of his sagacity and presence of mind in all emergencies of danger ; indeed, Cara Bey's success and elevation were principally attributed to him : whatever, therefore, he proposed, was executed with zeal ; and it had often been thought that, had his ambition prompted him to set up for himself, he might with ease have deposed his master and taken his place.

Cara Bey having taken merit to himself for conferring the distinction of his care and attention upon Hassan, with fawning duplicity called him his friend and adviser, informed him of his scheme, and of his intention of immediately putting it into execution. “ But,” my freind,” said he, “ you are the only man among us who can guide us in this adventure ; let me hope that you will be able to go also : we shall have plenty of plunder : you owe a grudge to those cows of Turks ; it will be a good time to pay it off.”

Hassan, who knew that his only chance of

revenge was present dissimulation, appeared to enter into his views, and said that, if he were only able to sit on his saddle, he would go; and there was no doubt that he could lead to the very house in which the maiden lived with her father and mother. "But," said he, "only look at my feet; they are totally useless! Besides, I am wasting away with such a burning heat all over my body, that I should die ere I got to Kars."

Cara Bey appeared to be in great distress at his suffering. He ordered the bandages to be taken off his feet; and then, indeed, he was convinced that, unless a miracle were performed, it would be impossible for him to stir for some time. "What is to be done?" said he.

"Let Mariam be called."

Upon which he ordered one of his women slaves, of that name, who enjoyed his confidence, and who acted as his cook, to be sent to him. It must be said that this individual

Mariam was one of the same mountain village in the Kurdistan as Hassan himself; had known him from childhood; and, if it must be avowed, a certain *tendresse* existed between them, though, on account of the severe restraint under which they both lived, it had never been expressed.

As soon as she appeared in the sick man's room, with a veil thrown loosely over her head and face, Cara Bey ordered her to approach. "Here, woman," said he, "look at this. You are a *hakeem*, a doctor, I know: you can cure sores and bruises. Here, you must do your best to cure Hassan Bey's feet." And throwing her a piece of gold he added, "And here, take this; another shall be given as soon as he can walk."

The tender-hearted Mariam, when she discovered the lacerated limbs, and moreover to whom they belonged, uttered a shriek, and began to bewail herself, until she was brought to her senses by her less sensitive master, who

ordered her to cease her lamentations, and to bring her salves and ointments. He then left the wounded man, with a promise of returning to him again in the evening, whilst Mariam commenced her operations.

We will not say what passed between them, but the sequel will show how important to the future welfare of Osmond was their meeting, the result of which it is not necessary at present to mention.

CHAPTER VII.

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing ;
Confederate season.

Hamlet.

CARA BEY returned, as he had promised, to the groaning Hassan. His feet had been dressed, and he avowed that they felt relieved ; but his fever still raged. It was of that he most complained ; and he insisted that, if something were not done for him, he must unavoidably die.

Cara Bey was more than ever anxious to avail himself of his lieutenant's services ; but was at a loss how to proceed. There was no one at hand who knew how to treat a fever.

“What is to be done?” said he to Hassan :
 “Will you take a talisman from the Kotchek ?
 or shall I send for the Karabash, or holy man,
 who lives at the foot of Aligez ?”

Hassan shook his head in apparent despair, and showed his parched tongue, and put up his hands to his aching temples. “There is only one thing to be done,” said he : “all Franks have a knowledge of medicine : send me the Frank whom you keep in confinement ; it is possible he may do me good. He has already saved my life twice ; he may, perhaps, save it a third time !”

Cara Bey at this request looked confused, if such an evil countenance could be so deranged ; but he hesitated not an instant to adopt the sick man’s request. Unwilling to face Osmond after the treachery of which he had been guilty, the dastardly chief slipped out of the sick room, whilst he ordered the Frank to be sent for. The thorough rascal will ever be afraid to face the honest man,

whatever may be his power : as, it is said, an enraged bull will shrink from the eye of man. Thus it was in this instance.

Osmond and his companions had, in the mean while, passed their time in anticipation of some communication from their infamous and perfidious host. They were served, through the medium of old Mahmoud, with provisions sufficiently coarse and scanty ; and, such as they were, they managed to convey a portion of them to the wretched Ivanovitch, who was only allowed a melancholy pittance of bread, water, and perhaps a little sour milk. He was young and full of hope ; and his spirits, through the help of Osmond's cheering conversation, were wonderfully supported. The principal check which they occasionally received was, when he protested that, through the walls of his prison, he heard the moans and lamentations of some imprisoned wretches, still more ill-treated, perhaps, than himself, who evidently were lingering away a hopeless

existence in some adjacent dungeon. Osmond, who fully believed the fact, and was even convinced that he heard the same noises, questioned Mahmoud upon the subject, who almost as much as avowed that the prisons of the castle, which were situated in various subterranean parts of it, were filled with desponding prisoners, merchants, travellers, and even inhabitants of villages, who, in attacks upon caravans, and invasions of inhabited places, had been seized and immured by Cara Bey and his adventurous gang.

They were now for the second time about to witness the setting sun from a small window situated nearly opposite those of the harem. From this window a slight view of the distant country, bounded by the western mountains, was obtained, and, by a happy accident, the very spot in which the sun made his exit was distinguishable. They were casting their eyes in melancholy mood at this small portion of the beauties of nature, and Os-

mond was speculating in his mind upon the chance that was left him of ever again enjoying them with that liberty of heart and person which was to him one of the principal sources of happiness, when a step was heard proceeding towards the door, and a command to Mahmoud to open.

This was no sooner done, than one of Cara Bey's servants entered, and ordered the Frank — Osman, as he called him — to follow him. Osmond immediately asked "Wherefore?" Stasso, fearing more treachery, said that, if his master went, he would go also. Mustafa looked as if he had been condemned to instant death, and stirred not. There was a hesitation, and the servant appeared uncertain what to do, when, recollecting the object of his message, he said, "Hassan Aga is sick; you must try to cure him. The Bey has ordered it so; follow me you must. Bismillah!"

Osmond was too happy to have an opportunity to see something more of the castle than

the four walls in which he had been confined, to hesitate any longer to follow the servant. Besides, he was more than ever anxious to see Hassan, from whom he made no doubt he could extract some information concerning his future fate, and the intentions of Cara Bey towards him. He, consequently, desired Stasso to remain where he was, and informed the servant that he was ready to follow him.

When he entered Hassan's room, he could scarcely recognize, in the pallid cheek and sunken eye of the face before him, the once animated countenance of his travelling companion and deliverer from prison. "Hassan, my friend!" said Osmond, "what has happened? What evil eye has stricken you? Who has thrown you into this state?"

The poor man could not find words to answer, for he, too, was struck at Osmond's altered looks; all he did was to uncover his feet and point to them. He could not have spoken more eloquently had he used the most

pathetic forms of speech. Osmond understood at a glance the whole truth, and his blood ran cold with horror as he reflected upon the more than satanic wickedness which could have inflicted such punishment upon such a man.

At length Hassan found strength to say, "My feet will soon get well; but, alas! my fever! I burn—I can find no relief! I have sent to you; perhaps you, in your goodness, will tell me what to do."

Osmond took up the sick man's hand, which was indeed scorching with fever, and, feeling his throbbing pulse, mournfully shook his head. "*Chok chey!*—it is much!" said he, with an expression of great sympathy in his tone and manner; "I can do nothing, alas! You know I lost everything at Kars: had I my medicines here, with the help of God, I might cure you; but now, whither can I turn me?"

Hassan's countenance fell as he heard these words; there was a look of despondency in

Osmond's face that unmanned him, and he almost felt as if death were about to overtake him.

"But stay!" exclaimed Osmond, struck by a sudden thought, and at the same instant thrusting his hand into a side-pocket of his Tatar's coat, "let us see; perhaps — they may still be here; I used to carry some always about me. No — I fear — I have none. Still I think I ought to have some:" then inserting his hand still deeper, he cried out, "Yes, yes! thanks to God! I have. Here are two powders left; by the blessing of Heaven, I may save you yet!" Upon this, he drew forth two papers containing the well-known fever-powders, which during his travels he had always been in the habit of carrying about his person, whilst a thrill of joy ran through his frame and communicated itself to the sick man.

"*Shukier Allah!*" exclaimed Osmond.

"*Shukier Allah!*" repeated Hassan, in re-

sponse ; such faith did he put in Osmond's knowledge and sagacity.

Had any one of his own countrymen produced two such miniature papers before the eyes of Hassan, and assured him that they contained medicines which would effect his cure, he would have laughed him to scorn ; but Osmond's word was enough : he believed at once everything he said, and although he might imagine it was through the agency of a charm, or a talisman, that he was about to receive relief, still he believed in the efficacy of the medicine, because it was administered by Osmond.

Osmond saw that Hassan wished to speak to him without a witness, and therefore devised a pretext for getting rid of the servant, who had remained in the room. "Brother," said he to him, "run in haste, get me some hot water ; see that it be boiling—do you hear?"

"Upon my head be it !" said the other, unwittingly, and left the room.

The instant he had disappeared, Hassan rose from his bed, and with astonishing alacrity and strength, making an effort upon himself, seized Osmond's hand, and exclaimed with animation, "My lord, my master, you have saved my life twice! You will, please God! save it a third time. But hear me—let me save your's. Cara Bey is a murderer—a demon! Listen to these words; for God's sake listen, and hearken to my advice! On the evening of his return from this expedition to Kars, a large dish of pillau (rice) will be served up to you and your companions. Eat not a grain of it—it will be poisoned—Do you hear?—but thrust your hand under the rice,—at the bottom of the dish you will find a key; that key unlocks the postern-gate leading from your prison to the face of the mountain. The moment you have opened it,—fly, fly, in God's name! You will have the whole night before you; for, trusting to the effects of the poison, the villain will not go

near you till the morrow: he will then expect to see you dead. He has done so before — I know the monster! I know him — villain! coward! traitor! Thank God, I have said it!” Upon which, the poor fellow sank down so exhausted, that he almost fainted in Osmond’s arms.

Osmond was deeply affected by this mark of attachment: he felt that he had greatly wronged the suffering man by suspecting him of being a party concerned in the treachery of his master; and he also felt himself relieved from the necessity of holding any measures of faith towards Cara Bey, who would thus barbarously have put him to death. With this prospect of emancipation before him, his mind naturally turned towards Providence with feelings of gratitude;—having made up his mind to the worst consequences, he felt cheered by this unexpected prospect of relief.

Elated by such an accession of new hopes, he remained for awhile absorbed in thought,

until he found the sick man whom he was supporting, revive. As soon as he could speak, Osmond anxiously enquired what he meant by the expedition to Kars, although he too well suspected the mischiefs which it foreboded.

“He has determined to carry off Suleiman’s daughter,” said Hassan.

“Ah! I thought as much,” said Osmond, scarcely able to draw breath as he spoke. “Tell me — can I go with him? Tell him I know the house — I know how to procure an admittance!”

“The ruffian is too wary, too jealous; I doubt whether he will allow you to go.”

“I must, I must go!” said Osmond, with passion and despair in his heart. “My friend Hassan, endeavour to persuade him that the expedition cannot take place without me. You know all that has happened; the maiden must not fall into his hands!”

“Ah!” said Hassan dolefully, “I see you are not yet fully aware into whose power you

have fallen ; if you think it possible to deceive him where a woman is concerned, you are mistaken. Besides, the only chance of leading him is by contradiction ; perverseness is his first characteristic, — recollect that : we must be very cautious.”

“What, then, is to be done to save her?” said Osmond despondingly.

“Save yourself!” answered Hassan, who was a true Mussulman in his ideas of women. “What is a woman, after all? there are many women in the world ; but you have only one soul — save that.”

Osmond perceived all the kindness of Hassan’s feelings towards him, and, impelled by his desire to protect Ayesha, and his fear that this grateful barbarian would himself be led into danger, entreated him, whilst he planned the safety of others, to think of his own, and not expose himself to Cara Bey’s vengeance.

“Fear not,” said Hassan ; “fear not for me : we know how to settle our own quarrels. Let

it not be said that the stranger has been entrapped to meet his death by my means. I am a match for the traitor; he shall feel that the worm which he now spurns under his feet, can turn upon him. Save yourself — save those who are with you — and leave the rest to me!”

By this time the servant returned with the hot water, when Osmond, having administered one of the powders, gave directions about preserving warmth, described how they would act, and desired that he might be called again after the lapse of a certain length of time. He then left the room and returned to his prison.

Cara Bey had watched with impatience for the termination of Osmond's visit. As soon as he heard that it was over, he returned to the sick room, and anxiously enquired what had been its result; when Hassan described the talismanic powder which he had just taken, prognosticated its effects, and informed him that he hoped soon to be well. Cara Bey shook his head, incredulous of its virtues, and

again would have sent for a Karabash, or wise man, who, he affirmed, by laying his hands upon his neck and shoulders, would do more for him than any Frank, or father of Franks, be he who he might.

In due time the medicine began to work its desired effect. Its violent and refreshing action upon the pores soon procured such relief that the fever disappeared like magic, and with it much of the general infirmity complained of by the patient. His wounded feet, too, partook of the good effect, for his fever having abated, the wounds bore a more healthy appearance. In short, he announced himself convalescent. Cara Bey was the first to cry out ‘a miracle!’ Believing that he possessed in Osmond a physician who could cure all ills, he contemplated the securing him for ever in his service; and thus, armed with his priest on one side, and his doctor on the other, felt fresh confidence in the prosecution of his nefarious designs. But still his most pressing object was the formation

of the expedition to Kars ; and, notwithstanding the certainty that he might soon again enjoy the services of his lieutenant, so great was his impatience, that he could scarcely prevail upon himself to wait the few days necessary for the re-establishment of his strength.

His principal object now was to ascertain the distribution of the interior of Suleiman Aga's house, in order that he might effect the seizure of Ayesha with the least possible difficulty. Of this Hassan was ignorant : he could point out which was the house, but could do no more. He was aware, however, that both Lord Osmond and Stasso knew a passage into it through the Armenian's terrace ; and of this he informed his chief, who no sooner heard the important fact than he determined to see and question them.

Hassan would have taken advantage of this opportunity to urge the necessity of taking Osmond with him on the expedition, had he not been afraid of too early awakening the sus-

pitions of his chief on that head; he therefore said nothing for the present to influence his mind, hoping that he would of his own accord adopt his wishes.

Cara Bey having returned to his own room, ordered Osmond and his two attendants to be brought before him; and, having now an object to gain in the communications which he wished to draw from them, adopted the utmost obsequiousness in his behaviour to them, thereby exhibiting the whole baseness of his deceitful nature. As soon as they appeared, he invited Osmond to be seated, enquired officiously after his health, and put into play every fawning art to make him forget his ill-treatment.

Osmond received his advances with the most repulsive coldness, and, without giving him leave to proceed, stopped his fulsome speeches by asking, "What he meant by detaining him a prisoner, who had sought his protection, and come to him on the faith of his officer's word?"

“ *Ai guzum* — my eyes !” said the crafty wretch with a hypocritical smile; “ what words are these ? We are rude men, untaught in the ways of the world. You would not have me unmindful of my own security ? This is a bad world, and there are wicked men in it. You come to me, by your own account, a fugitive from the authorities of my own government. You are said to have disobeyed its laws; you would have infringed one of its most sacred observances, and invaded the sanctity of our harems. Am I not to be upon my guard when men come to me under such circumstances ?”

“ You know,” said Osmond with indignation, “ this is an excuse and a base subterfuge. The authorities of Kars had as little right to detain my person as you have. I am an Englishman : if you insist upon keeping me a prisoner, my government will find means to overtake with its power those who insult me. I demand of you to set me free, and to allow me

to return to my own country. Wherefore do you detain me?"

"Be not so hasty, my friend," said Cara Bey; "everything will be right in time. We are not men to harm the stranger, or to close the gate upon those who seek our skirt. *Yavash, yavash* — slowly, slow. You have this castle for your residence; no one will harm you here. We have need of your assistance. *Mashallah!* — praise be to Allah! you are a man of wisdom and of resource. You have received protection from us. You must give us your advice in return. Have you understood me?"

"If by protection you mean shutting me up between four walls, and keeping me in durance vile like a criminal — like one of the many poor wretches whom you detain in your dungeons, let me tell you that I do not understand you. Set me free, and then you may talk to me as a friend. Until then, I must treat you as my enemy."

"So be it," said Cara Bey with assumed

frankness ; “ you shall be free, and you are at liberty to return whence you came. I will myself conduct you back to Kars ; to the Russians you cannot go—they are my enemies ; to the Persians still less—they drink my blood. We will return to Kars together. Will that suit you ?” he enquired with a most sarcastic smile.

“ You are aware,” said Osmond, “ that, if I return to Kars, my life is in danger. What words are these ?”

“ Do you know the house of Suleiman Aga at Kars ?” said Cara Bey, putting on a look of indifference.

“ I do. What then ?”

“ And you have seen his daughter ?”

“ I have. What more ?”

“ Could you conduct me there ?”

“ Wherefore do you ask ? If by this question you mean to ask me to be a party to sever an innocent maiden from her home, I tell you at once that I will not. I would pro-

tect her with my life from insult and danger ; but I will never lend myself to make her wretched."

" You will not ?" said Cara Bey, putting off the obsequiousness of his smile, and assuming his own ferociousness of aspect. "*Bakalum*—We shall see ! Mashallah ! you are a wonderful man. You come into our country, seduce our women, invade our harems, and then, forsooth, set yourself up as a saint ! Am I a fool, or you a rogue—which ?"

To these words Osmond would have answered with all the warmth of indignation ; but, as he felt that the existence of others as well as his own might depend upon his conduct, he did his best to smother his wrath, and remained silent. He hoped, however, from the manner in which he had received Cara Bey's intimations concerning his projected scheme, that sheer perverseness would lead him to require his attendance. And so far he was not mistaken ; for at that moment the tyrant had de-

terminated to take advantage of his services. After a pause, Cara Bey continued the conversation, by endeavouring to draw from Osmond every particular concerning his acquaintance with Ayesha; but in this he met with little success. Finding himself foiled, he gradually gave vent to the dictates of his coarse mind, and said things so abhorrent to the ears of a lover, that Osmond's patience was exhausted, and he exhibited by the violence and impetuosity of his answers, how much in fact his affections were engaged. This circumstance confirmed in Cara Bey's mind the suspicion which he had entertained of the nature of their acquaintance, and made him doubt whether he should insist upon Osmond's accompanying him or not. He reserved this subject for future consideration, and in the mean while ordered his prisoner back into confinement.

His doubts increased as he thought over the subject, and he therefore determined to have recourse to his priest. This personage, jealous of

his power over Cara Bey, had taken alarm at the success which had attended Osmond's treatment of Hassan. It was rumoured all through the castle that he had worked a miracle upon him. That the sick man should have been restored to health by merely swallowing a diminutive powder, was altogether so improbable that every one attributed the cure to the agency of some power more than human; and this was touching so closely upon the province of the Kotchek that he was immediately determined to overthrow the influence which he foresaw Osmond might obtain. No sooner, therefore, was he questioned by Cara Bey than, with a short reference to the power which he pretended to worship, he gave a decided negative against Osmond's going. This decision had the effect of settling Cara Bey's doubts, and he resolved forthwith that Osmond should not accompany him, but remain where he was until his return. Still, he had not yet acquired the information so necessary to his success upon the

interior of Suleiman Aga's house; but then it occurred to him that Stasso, or the Boshnak, as he was called in the castle, might furnish it just as well as his master. Accordingly he ordered him to appear, and the interview was successful; for in the answers which he received to his questions, he learned everything which he could desire.

The expedition was at length finally settled. Cara Bey, accompanied by Hassan, Stasso, and twenty chosen men, were to proceed to Kars, and to introduce themselves into the city during the course of the day. The chief was then to make a survey of the premises, and at about night-fall they were to proceed to work. The prize being once seized, she was to be conducted to the castle with all possible expedition; and to crown the event, a general feast was to be given to the whole establishment the day after the return of the party.

Osmond returned to his prison in a state

of mind truly deplorable. All his fears, he foresaw, were now about to be realized. When he was told how the expedition had been arranged, and that he was excluded from it, his heart smote him with apprehension ; for what torture that was ever imagined could be greater than that which he was now called upon to endure ? Here, under his own eyes, had been planned, with all the coolness of calculation of the most consummate art and villany, a tragedy unparalleled in the wickedness of man. A city was to be invaded ; blood was to flow ; lives probably would be sacrificed ; an innocent maiden was to be torn from her parents—all to gratify the lusts of one selfish, remorseless monster ; whilst he, her ardent admirer, was condemned to remain conscious of the perpetration of these outrages, and unable in any manner either to prevent them, or give succour where it might be in his power. The agitation into which he was thrown, as he contemplated all the horrors with which the seizure must

inevitably be attended, threw him into a state of mind bordering upon frenzy. All the religious feeling which he could command, all his habitual resignation to the decrees of Providence, proved unavailing in calming the transports of his rage. When his imagination presented to him the fair form of his beloved Ayesha struggling with her vile oppressor, when he heard her unavailing cries, and thought he could distinguish the exulting and demonlike accents of his voice, his hand would clutch an imaginary dagger and drive it headlong into the breast of the murderous wretch. Yet still, when it came to the point—how he was to act—what directions he was to give to his servant as to the conduct he was to pursue—he was thrown into greater perplexity than ever. He would willingly have said, Slay the monster—use your dagger, plant it straight into his heart—or, when you draw your pistol, place it to his temple ere you draw the trigger;—but these awful injunctions

stuck in his throat ere he gave them utterance. The true man, the Christian, in fine, prevailed, and he relapsed into hopeless wretchedness.

There was one precaution, however, which he felt he could take, — he could arm the feeble girl herself: — she, whose only weapon was the retiring modesty of her nature — who could oppose no other resistance to the brutality of the man save the dignity of innocence — she, he knew, would prove a dragon of intrepidity and resolution when it became necessary to defend her honour. Osmond drew from his girdle a small dagger, which is not unfrequently worn by Asiatics, and giving it to Stasso, said —

“Seize the opportunity, when you can do it unperceived, to slip this into the hand of Ayesha, and tell her it comes from Osmond; she will understand you.”

With this solitary consolation he was obliged for the present to rest contented. He would again have had communication with Hassan,

with a view of quickening the desire of revenge which he knew existed in his breast; but he checked himself. He still could not forget that the decrees of Providence are inscrutable; that in spite of man's short-sighted endeavours to dispose of events according to his own wishes and for his own purposes, there is an intelligence beyond his reason which holds the scales of justice, and promotes his well-being, in spite of his puny efforts.

Everything throughout the castle soon after wore the appearance of preparation: the men were busied in looking to their arms, and in selecting the best horses; the chiefs held consultations. It was ordered that all traces of the Yezidi costume should be avoided, and that every one should appear either as a Kurd or an Osmanli. Stasso was provided with a suitable horse; Hassan hobbled about as well as he was able, and showed, or pretended to show, the zeal which was usual to him whenever any expedition was on foot. No unnecessary per-

sons were permitted to go ; two or three led horses were the only supernumeraries allowed ; and the whole was conducted upon the principle of a secret marauding excursion. At length, when all was ready, and the fortunate moment arrived for the chief's putting his foot into the stirrup, Cara Bey, throwing uncommon seriousness and resolution into his tone and manner, stepped up to Stasso, and said —

“ Now, open your eyes, man ! Recollect yourself ; and recollect that, if you show the smallest symptom of treachery, your master dies : I say no more.”

Upon this the gang took its departure.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Alley exclaimed, ‘ In the most holy name, Crohoore, where are you going, and where are you dragging me ? ’ ”

Tales by the O'Hara Family.

DURING the events which we have recorded in the last five chapters, Ayesha passed her life in the seclusion of her father's harem, living upon the recollections of Osmond. Whether she should ever see him again, was a question which she was constantly asking herself. The last words which he had spoken to her were as strongly imprinted on her memory as the incisions of the diamond are on the crystal ; his last look was as vividly present to her as the

parting gleam of the sun is to the inhabitant of the Pole, who loses his cheering aspect until the next revolving season. Every evening, precisely at the same hour at which he had left her, would she proceed to the terrace, stand on the very spot where they had stood together, repeat, word for word, the conversations which had passed between them, and, looking over the parapet into the street, earnestly gaze at the very place where, urging on his horse at full speed, he had turned round to give the last long, lingering look, which spoke his melancholy farewell. Then she would pass whole hours in looking at the ring which he had given her — inspecting the trinket which had so excited his astonishment — and giving way to a fond affection for the handkerchief which had called forth his ecstacy. She was constantly meditating upon every question which he had put to her concerning those objects. He had suggested doubts of her being the daughter of those whom she had ever been

taught to call her parents. A man of his wisdom and excellence, she argued, could not have said so much, nor have been so struck by what he had seen, without very good reasons. Then, if she were not the child of Suleiman and Zabetta, whose could she possibly be? Although she sometimes fancied she had some recollections of another sort of people than those who now surrounded her, yet they were so faint that they amounted almost to nothing. The doubts which now existed in her mind about herself produced a restlessness, a desire to be more fully informed, which prevented her from applying her mind with effect to any rational occupation. Frequently would she endeavour to bring her father to speak upon her early life, and put questions to him which she hoped might lead to some remark or description explanatory of her doubts; but he always was sure to waive the subject, and intrench himself behind his pipe and his habitual silence. She was more

afraid of her mother, and, as there was but little mutual confidence between them, she seldom ventured to talk upon subjects which were not proposed by Zabetta; but she often found her thoughts betraying to herself the little regard which she really felt for either of her supposed parents. Suleiman Aga was kind to her, it is true, but it was the negative kindness of an indolent passive nature, which would rather be well with all mankind than be at the trouble of being otherwise. He loved her perhaps better than most things — perhaps better than any other living being, but then he loved his own dear ease better. She was so beautiful to look at, that no eyes which had human feelings for associates, could see her without at least a pleasurable sensation of some sort or other — either of admiration, as a wonder of God's creation, or of actual love. Her demeanour was of that modest and unpretending nature that none but a fiend could ever have the heart to do her harm; and her man-

ners were so free from all affectation, so simple and affectionate, that to speak to her once was sufficient in order to be her slave for ever: there was little credit, therefore, due to Suleiman for being kind to her, even supposing he was not her father; he could not help himself, — he must be either a man, and love her — or a fiend, which he was not, and find pleasure in doing her harm.

Zabetta, her nominal mother, on the other hand, was of a totally different disposition from her father. She loved Ayesha, but her love was that of property, of possessing a gem of great value, by the best disposal of which she might raise her fortune and advance her views in life. Although she had not passed the age of vanity, and was still proud of her own beauty, it never occurred to her to be jealous of the charms of Ayesha; for she was too much interested in their intrinsic value, that is, in what they would be likely to fetch in the market of human passions and desires, ever to

feel jealous of them. She had speculated greatly upon them when Osmond was her neighbour ; and, had it not been for the intervention of the priest on the minaret, she had fully calculated that they would have insured her emancipation from her present existence, a return to the joys of civilized life, and perhaps the acquisition of dignities which her imagination had whispered to her might be the portion of the mother of a royal sultana. But all this had vanished with Osmond, and, her mercenary calculating spirit having been disappointed, she was reduced to return, with a proportionate increase of peevishness and ill-humour, to her old drone of a husband, and to the monotonous existence of a Turk's wife. She would occasionally revert to the past in her conversation with Ayesha, for she entertained a sort of lingering hope that something might still be forthcoming from what she hoped was Osmond's ardent love for her daughter. On one occasion, having observed that Ayesha wore a ring which she had never

before seen, she eagerly inquired where she had got it; and Ayesha at once owned that it had been given to her by Osmond.

“Tell me,” said Zabetta, “do you think we shall ever see the Frank again? After all, he is a man, and not to be frightened away by that animal of a mufti.”

“What can I say?” said Ayesha. “it is even as our fates may dispose; in truth he is a man, and not easily to be prevented from doing that which is right: but who knows where he is now?”

“If he proves himself to be a lover who runs away at a first fright, there is that for him!” answered Zabetta: upon which she threw her five fingers into the air, as the utmost mark of her contempt.

“Do not say so, my mother; certain death awaited him if he stayed. You would not have had him killed?”

“What do I know!” said her mother; “a faithless lover is worthy of death, and even

worse. When once he returns to his own red-faced women, who show their faces to every comer, will he ever more think of us? it is all asses' talk to suppose it."

"But he assured me," said Ayesha, "that I was like one of his countrywomen; he started when he saw this locket." On this, she produced the locket with the engraved arms upon it, which she now always wore next to her heart.

"What say you?" said Zabetta, with much animation and eagerness. "When did he ever see this? why did you ever show it to him?"

"I never knew that there could be any harm in his seeing it?" answered her daughter. "He remarked it himself, seeing it upon my neck."

"Give it to me, it is mine," said Zabetta; "you must never wear it more: how could you be so inconsiderate as to show it to him?"

Ayesha delivered up this precious object of her lover's attention with tears in her eyes, but at the same time was awakened to the myste-

rious interest which it seemed to create in her mother, and felt determined to have some explanation on a subject which seemed to involve so much of her own fate. "Here it is," said she, "but if you love me, tell me its history. I am sure it is connected with something of consequence, or else why should you be so anxious about keeping it secret, or why should he have shown so much curiosity about it, and said that it belonged to one of his own nation?"

Zabetta manifested evident signs of confusion at Ayesha's questions. She took the locket from her, never returned it, and for some minutes after remained silent and in thought. Ayesha had never enjoyed so good an opportunity before for clearing up her doubts, and would not allow her mother to remain silent. "You shut up your heart from me," she observed. "There must be some reason for this. I must tell you, too, that he said I could not be your daughter. Why did he say so?"

"He is a madman, like all his countrymen,"

answered Zabetta, in a tone of great peevishness, and evidently much disconcerted; "and you are mad to have paid attention to his lies. What say you? not my daughter! --- then who are you? whose daughter did he say you were? tell me that." This last question she put with evident marks of disquietude at the answer she might receive.

"He often looked into my face with the most inquiring look," said Ayesha, "as if he thought he could perceive a likeness to others whom he had before seen; but he never hinted who he thought I could be, and never said who he thought I was."

This answer, though far from satisfactory to the intriguing woman, still appeared to ease her of a load, which she expressed by saying, "Go, child, go! do not believe such nonsense. All men are flatterers, only they set about it in different ways: he thought to flatter you by saying that you looked like one of his odious women."

“Then I am your daughter,” said Ayesha with affection, “and Suleiman Aga is my father? Prove good parents to me, and I will ever be your grateful child. Allah, Allah! my senses have been bewildered by doubt, but they shall be so no more.”

Zabetta's heart (alas! she had none) could not be softened by this simple appeal to her feelings as a mother. She made up a little show of sympathy; but it was poor, indeed, when compared to the sincerity of the lovely maiden who addressed her. They, however, quitted each other with different feelings from those which previously existed between them. Zabetta felt like a criminal: she never after could see Ayesha without the terror of detection coming over her; her manner towards Ayesha was involuntarily changed; she dreaded to see her in confidential conversation with Suleiman, lest he might enlighten her mind; and although so far away from all the scenes of her early life, still conscience—conscience

was always setting watch over her, and would not allow her for a moment to hide herself from her own thoughts. On the other hand, Ayesha, however willing she was to persuade herself that Suleiman and Zabetta were her real father and mother, still, from the sort of mysterious backwardness which they both showed in answering her questions, from her mother's conduct about the locket, and, more than all, from the recollected words of her lover, she could not preserve herself from feeling a secret conviction that she did not in fact belong to them.

The day after the conversation above recorded, Ayesha, as usual, had taken up her station on the terrace; and after having passed the evening in her wonted meditations, just before returning to her chamber, she leaned over the parapet, and looked down into the street. Near the very spot where Osmond had turned round to give her his last farewell, she observed two men who seemed deeply

intent in examining her father's house. Both were strangers in the city, and by their dress might be Kurds, and none of the higher order; at all events, they wore a suspicious look. One of them she had decidedly never seen before; the form of the other, tall and handsome, she recognised; but as her view of them was transient—for she drew back the moment she became an object of their attention—the impression which they made upon her was but slight. The circumstance, however, of two strangers examining her father's house, struck her as remarkable, and she dwelt upon it just long enough to divert her thoughts from their usual channel. She was about descending the terrace steps, when, casting her eyes towards the mountains, she perceived the moon rising behind their rugged summits, shedding so soft and soothing a light over the surrounding landscape, and, as it were, inviting her to stay, that instead of returning to the house, she called to Nourzadeh to bring up

a carpet and cushion, that she might sit undisturbed in the enjoyment of her meditations. She placed herself behind the projecting wall which formed the separation between Sulaiman Aga's terrace and the Armenian dyer's; and sometimes giving a vibration to the chords of her guitar, sometimes in a half-meditative, half-dozing mood, she allowed her mind to run through every stage of her existence, from her first childhood to the present moment. Nourzadeh sat in a distant corner, half asleep. Ayesha, with her eyes fixed on vacant space, all at once, to her surprise, perceived the shadow of a head on the wall before her, which disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. "Who is there?" she exclaimed, half sinking with tremor and half inclined to cry out for aid. No one answered. She thought it might perhaps be the Armenian himself, and therefore made no more inquiry; but, in a low voice to the black slave, said, "Did you see that, Nourzadeh?"

“ No, I saw nothing !” said the girl, starting from her sleep.

The small tip of a shadow still played upon the wall, which might be the fringe of a head-dress. Ayesha's fears increased : she arose—she heard the step of her mother at the bottom of the terrace steps, and cried out to her, “ Mother ! here ! come up ! I am sure there are men on the neighbour's terrace ! this must not be.” At this call, Zabetta, almost angry at the appeal, came shuffling up the steps, when, on a sudden, from behind the wall issued four men, in the dress of Kurds, armed at all points, and without uttering a word seized upon both Ayesha and her mother. They gagged their mouths as well as they were able, forced them across to the entrance-door of the Armenian's terrace, and carried them straightway to the street-entrance. They both made every resistance in their power, but what was woman's strength when compared to the power of men of the most

herculean forms ? Their cries, their struggles, were of no avail ; they were instantly mounted upon two horses, and led away in rapid motion through the streets. It need not be said who were their assailants.

The adventures of Cara Bey and his gang, after their departure, were briefly as follows. They had met with no impediment in their journey to Kars. Hassan was still so weak, and so little able to use his feet, that it was thought most advisable to leave him at some small distance, sufficiently near to be within call, with a reserve of ten men, in case an increase of force were necessary. Cara Bey, with Stasso, entered the gates first, accompanied by two men, and, little by little, others slipped into the town, with orders to be in readiness at and about the house of the Armenian Bogos, whence the abduction was to be effected. Several of the most resolute were to take possession of the town-gate at the prescribed time, in order to allow of a free

egress. Silence and caution were strictly enjoined. Everything had hitherto promised success, although many of the town's-people, and particularly the guard stationed at the gate, remarked that more strangers than ordinary were seen entering the town during the day. Still no suspicion had been raised, and matters went on as usual.

Cara Bey and Stasso were the two whom Ayesha had seen from the parapet of the terrace. Stasso had several times been tempted to betray the whole plot to the authorities, but, when he recollected the parting threat of the chief, and the certainty that it would be put into execution should he waver, his fidelity, riveted by his fears for his master's safety, remained unmoved, and he plunged headlong into the whole scheme as if he really had been one of the assailants. When night had fairly set in, by the means of his knowledge of the habits and ways of the Armenian's home, he procured a quiet and easy entrance. The

horses were in readiness, and a party of the most determined of the gang were at hand. Cara Bey was close in attendance with two others, whilst Stasso by himself stepped up to the door and let fall one solitary rap of the iron knocker. "Who is that?" said the well-known voice of Bogos from within. "It is I." "Who?" repeated the voice. "It is the Boshnak; don't you know me?" Upon which the rumbling of an opening bolt was heard. Stasso beckoned Cara Bey to approach. The door was opened with caution, but, as soon as Bogos perceived his old friend, he uttered an exclamation of joy, and threw it wide open. Followed by Cara Bey and the two others, he immediately entered and closed the door after him. "Say not a word, or you are a dead man," said Cara Bey to the Armenian. "I am Cara Bey—do you hear?—if you stir until we leave your house, you shall surely die. Give us a light." Stasso then taking a lamp, immediately led the way up the well-known

steps to the terrace, and there, followed by the robber chief and his ruffians, proceeded to act that part of the tragedy which we have already described, seizing the two unhappy women, whilst the terrified, half-fainting dyer remained in too great a state of fear and astonishment to be able to stir.

A gathering of so many strange people around the Armenian's house had, however, attracted attention, and one who did not like their appearance had run with the news to the Pasha. When Ayesha and her mother were seated on their horses, the cavalcade, headed by Stasso, and brought up in the rear by Cara Bey, was ordered to advance, and such was the commotion throughout the streets, that the shouts of the frightened inhabitants were heard, and shots were fired by way of alarming the guard. Its progress was unchecked until it reached the city gate, and there it was evident it would not be allowed to pass without a struggle. The guards were overpowered in the

first instance by Cara Bey's men, who had opened the gate with violence; but the delay caused by the scuffle had enabled some of the Pasha's horse to come to their assistance; upon which a conflict ensued: the flash of pistols, the gleaming of swords, occasional shots mingled with the hoarse cries of men and the screams of women, all produced a confusion so great that it was difficult to distinguish the assailants from the assailed. All this was confined within the space of a gateway, which being arched and covered with a dome, made the reverberations of the noise doubly loud and terrific. Cara Bey took a conspicuous attitude, and dealt about him with all the recklessness of a gambler who had staked his all. Perceiving fresh troops coming against him, he had just time enough to despatch one of his horsemen to order Hassan's immediate advance with the reserve. Stasso's only desire was to save Ayesha and her mother. He watched their motions with the jealousy of

a friend and a countryman. Foreseeing that he never again should have so good an opportunity of speaking to Ayesha, he approached her, and as he placed in her hand the dagger which Osmond had charged him to give her, whispered, "Osmond Aga has sent you this; he says you will know how to use it. You are in Cara Bey's power: more I cannot say." The astonished maiden, from fear of her life, passed with rapid emotion into dread of the monster whose name she had heard. She now began to utter the most piteous cries, hoping that either death would come to her relief, or that the Pasha's troops would be victorious. But she was not destined to see her wishes accomplished; for as soon as the Turks saw the fresh troops arriving, headed by Hassan, they thought it most prudent to retire from the contest, and opened wide their gates in order to give the enemy a free exit,—upon the principle that it is better to bring a bad secretion to the surface of the body, than to suffer it to

destroy the vitals. The strife did not end without loss of life. Two of the Pasha's men were killed, several of the robbers were seriously wounded, and their chief himself did not remain unhurt. But heedless, at the time, of his wound, which had been caused by a sabre cut in the arm, he only thought of retreat; and, having once gained the open country, he allowed nothing to stop his progress until he reached a place of safety, out of the possibility of being overtaken by the Pasha's troops.

Ayesha and Zabetta had been placed under the charge of a guard, who conducted them in silence, and with all the respect due to women who were the property of their chief. Ayesha had not recognised Stasso in the dark, but the repetition of Osmond's name, and the nature of his gift, had called forth a train of thought in which she endeavoured to unravel the thread of the mystery with which she was surrounded. The feeling that Osmond must in some manner or other be nigh at hand, and that, if so, he

was watching over her safety, gave her a momentary gleam of delight, and she abandoned herself to the idea with rapture : but when she reflected into whose power she really had fallen, when she recalled to her mind the thousand stories which she had heard of the Devil-worshippers' licentiousness and cruelty, her heart drooped, her courage failed, and the most dire apprehensions of the fate preparing for her took possession of her faculties, and left her a prey to terror and grief.

Zabetta, on the other hand, having got rid of the fears which during the fight she had entertained for her person, when she found herself free from those objects of her aversion — her husband and his dull city, began to hope that her wishes for emancipation were about to be realized ; and when she learned into whose hands she had fallen, instead of bemoaning her hard fate, she congratulated herself upon having made so good an exchange. Her intriguing, restless, and unsteady character was much

better calculated to flourish in the turmoil of a robber's castle than in the peaceable somniferous walls of the house of a Turkish elder. Cara Bey's reputation had in her eyes many charms. The revelry with which he was said to be constantly surrounded, sounded agreeably in her ears. Within the precincts of Suleiman's dull house she had never heard the sound of mirth ; all wore the garb of mortification : instead of genuflexion, she would have had dancing ; instead of silence and holy invocation, she would have been pleased with much talking, much intriguing, and with the noise of instruments and the voices of singers. The exchange which she was about to make, she therefore foresaw, would be all in her favour ; and besides, she felt her importance by being the owner of a daughter whose charms would ever command for them both a paramount influence over men. And her own attractions, too, she flattered herself were not to be despised ; she was of that age, and of that substance,

which she knew were better adapted to the taste of the man with whom she was about to become acquainted, than the slight, graceful, and vanishing form of her daughter. With such consolatory reflections, she was far from allowing her spirits to be depressed, and she journeyed onward full of hope of future enjoyment, and of schemes for future elevation.

Cara Bey, in the mean while, little heeding either Ayesha or her mother, but giving his whole attention to his troops, thought only how he might best make good his retreat to some place of safety for the night. Having at length reached a mountain village, where he knew he should be free from molestation, he called a halt, and, quartering his men upon the inhabitants, took possession for himself of the zabit's (the chief's) house, whilst he ordered the women's apartments to be cleared for his captive females. Ayesha dismounted from her horse in such a state of feverish and nervous agitation, that, instead of wearing the bloom

of youth, her whole appearance rather betokened the approach of dissolution. At that moment there was but little in her person to attract attention; she met with no sympathy in her sufferings, and indeed where could such a feeling be found among barbarians accustomed only to scenes of blood and unmoved by faces of woe? Zabetta, on the other hand, was all animation; long had she been unconscious of such buoyancy of spirits; and when Cara Bey at length made his appearance, she was ready to receive him with smiles and welcome, and with such demonstrations of pleasure that he thought he had never yet seen any one so highly to his taste. At first, he took her to be Suleiman Aga's daughter herself, and was congratulating himself upon his prize, when Zabetta thought it right to undeceive him. He cast his eyes upon the unfortunate Ayesha, whose haggard eye, wan cheek, and grief-struck features made him start with surprise that she should ever have acquired the reputation which

made the whole country ring with her charms, and caused him to turn from her with disgust, in order to occupy himself exclusively with, to his eyes, her more attractive mother. Zabetta exerted herself to please. When he talked of his wound, she immediately insisted upon inspecting it, prescribed for it, and very soon, by her attentions and care, afforded him considerable relief. Her attentions were not thrown away ; Cara Bey was quite enchanted with the mother, and totally unheeded the daughter ; whilst Ayesha, putting up a mental prayer of resignation to the decrees of Heaven, thanked God for being thought worthy of neglect by the wretch into whose hands she had fallen. And thus passed away the first night of her captivity.

CHAPTER IX.

———— 'Tis time, 'tis time,
Round about the cauldron go ;
In the poison'd entrails throw.

Macbeth.

THE next morning the whole cavalcade left the village at an early hour, and proceeded with all diligence to Cara Bey's castle. Nothing worthy of remark occurred during its progress, excepting that Zabetta, among the surrounding horsemen, had discovered her old acquaintance and countryman, and, perhaps, we may add, admirer, Stasso ; who, although from motives of caution he carefully abstained from looking towards the women, still could not occasionally refrain from observing their motions. It so happened that, during a short stoppage on

account of some impediment on the road, they had approached sufficiently near for a look of recognition to pass between them. This look was remarked by Cara Bey. Jealousy of the direst nature instantly sprang into his heart, for an Asiatic, like a flint, strikes fire upon the least collision; and he resolved that, the moment they had reached his stronghold, Stasso should instantly return to his master and his prison. This feeling towards Stasso, by a natural train of thought, extended itself to his master, of whom he now became doubly jealous. He dwelt upon the precautionary steps which he had taken previously to his departure with demonlike complacency; for he thus hoped to secure himself from all farther annoyance on his account. He exulted when he reflected upon what he esteemed a masterpiece of deception, the having entrapped Osmond and his man into a prison, after having extracted from both all the service which they could give.

Having got rid of his prisoners, his next step would be, so he determined, to despatch a messenger with large presents to his patron, the Capidan Pasha, who he knew was both able and willing to shelter him from harm, in the complaints which doubtless would be made against him by the Pasha of Kars, and the authorities there, for his late attack upon their city. Having succeeded in this, he felt that he should be secure and at liberty to take his pleasure in his castle. His harem stored with beauties greater than any which Circassia could afford, and his person surrounded by men devoted to his service, he determined, before he engaged in any farther schemes of robbery, to give himself up to joy and revelry. Of wine he had a store, provisions abounded in his kitchens, of dancers and musicians he could command the best, what more could he want? A more finished monster of cruelty, lust, licentiousness, and wickedness of every kind, than this Asiatic, never had existed : but

the security in which he indulged proved to be false, for he had not anticipated the consequences of the punishment which he had inflicted upon Hassan. He improvidently supposed that, as all were submissive to his will, they were equally ready to forget his injurious treatment as soon as he was pleased again to notice them. He never calculated that the once faithful Hassan was now a mortal enemy seeking for revenge. What that revenge would be, Hassan had not yet determined, but he had sufficiently shown his inclination by the steps which he had taken for securing the escape of the preserver of his life. During the late expedition he had found no opportunity to gratify his revenge, and a fit occasion was still wanting to pour out the full measure of his wrath.

When the return of the chief was perceived from the turret-tops of his castle, the gates were thrown open, and every preparation was made for his reception. The priest was in

readiness to offer the proper congratulation upon the success of his predictions, as well as to receive the order for his promised donation. Every man was at his post, and the women of the harem were on the tiptoe of curiosity to see their new inmates. At length the throng of horses and horsemen passed through the arched gate and entered the court-yard. Ayesha and Zabetta were immediately taken to the harem. Cara Bey eyed all around him with the triumphant look of a conqueror. Everything had succeeded to his heart's content, saving the wound which he had received, and of which he hoped soon to be cured. He enquired whether the rice, the lambs, and all the requisite necessities, had been accumulated, to furnish the forthcoming feast with becoming plenty to his whole household; and he now extended the limits of his generosity by ordering appropriate presents in money to be given to all those who had been sharers in the expedition.

As soon as Zabetta entered Cara Bey's ha-

rem, the seat of her future existence, she immediately took upon herself the airs and consequence of its mistress. She had at one glance seen enough of her new master to know that neither timidity, meekness, nor mildness of demeanour, was likely to secure influence over him ; and as she possessed all the contrary qualities in a high degree, she felt that it was in her power to bring under her subjection this terror of Kurds and Turks. The old stock in the harem were too happy at first to see anybody, or anything, which could break the tedium of their existence : they paid almost divine honours to their new guests ; nothing, in their eyes, was good enough for them. They dwelt upon the words which fell from the lips of Zabetta as oracles ; and endeavoured to charm away the melancholy of Ayesha, by deafening her ears with the sound of their tambourines, accompanied by their best songs. But as Zabetta's pretensions to superiority became more open, so those of the former chief of

the harem began to awaken, and it was evident that, ere long, there would arise two factions ; and as a harem is ever a hotbed of passion, it was also evident that such factions would soon come to open hostilities. Ayesha would have kept herself an object of disgust for ever, if possible, rather than have attracted the least notice of her oppressor ; but as the fatigues of the journey and the first terrors of her mind wore off, her fatal beauty would return, in spite of every effort to conceal it, and make her shudder as she gazed in the glass, lest she should be esteemed attractive by the monster. From all that she had seen and heard, she conjectured that Osmond must be a prisoner in the castle. Oh ! to be so near him, and be debarred the possibility even of letting him know of her existence ! So tantalizing a thought wrung her heart to its very core ; but she cherished the present which he had sent her, as the true believer cherishes the book of his salvation. She secreted the dagger within

the folds of her dress, and there it rested ever at hand, as a faithful friend ready to protect her; there she let it remain until the awful moment when, with a high resolve, she determined it should be called forth to protect her from the infamy to which she felt she was exposed.

As soon as Stasso had dismounted, his first impulse was to seek the society of his wretched master; and Cara Bey was too happy to get rid of his presence to throw any obstacle in his way. Osmond had heard the commotion which had taken place in the castle, and had anticipated the return of his faithful servant, but with shuddering apprehension at the many miseries which must inevitably follow in its train.

When the door of his prison was thrown open, the eager Stasso rushed in; but what were his feelings, upon looking at his master, when he observed the sad alteration that had taken place in his features and person! He

started with dismay at his sunken eye, his hollow cheek, his restless motion, and his thin emaciated form. The effects of anxiety, watchfulness, and apprehension, had overpowered him; and, notwithstanding his constant effort to tranquillize his mind by submission to the decrees of Providence, still he so keenly felt the horrors of the position in which the unfortunate Ayesha was likely to be thrown, that his thoughts were perpetually distracted with fear for her safety.

The first words he uttered when he saw Stasso were, "Is Ayesha come? is she safe? is she well?" Stasso, still gazing at his master with the most affectionate solicitude, answered every enquiry, and then proceeded, in as few words as possible, to give a narrative of the whole expedition. Osmond gave ear to him with breathless attention, and, when his tale was over, walked about the room in silence for some time, as if revolving some great scheme in his mind. At length breaking

silence, the old jailor Mahmoud having left them, he said, "Stasso, I have resolved upon making a desperate effort to save the maiden. Listen to my words. I am sure that I can rely upon you—much will depend upon your zeal and activity. First, tell me, are you quite certain that you could find your way to the Russian station which Cara Bey attacked?" After a little thought, Stasso said, "I will forfeit my life if I do not! You may depend upon me. I recollect every stone; there is not a path that Stasso has trodden once that he cannot recollect."—"Well then, my scheme is this," said Osmond: "On the day when we receive our portion of the projected feast, if Hassan spoke the truth, we shall gain possession of the key which opens the postern of this our prison. You shall guide Captain Ivanovitch to the spot where his troops are stationed. It is intended that we shall be left to ourselves during the whole night: that night must be employed in leading a

detachment of his men hither; and then may God direct our efforts to free ourselves from this detestable tyrant!" Stasso heard him out with emotions scarcely to be described, and fell at his feet in a rapture of delight at the prospect which the scheme held out. He avowed his readiness to undertake his share of it with alacrity, and could foresee nothing but success. Osmond, trusting in Hassan's fidelity, would also willingly have unfolded to him the nature of his intentions, and asked Stasso whether he thought they might secure an interview with him, for then they should ensure an accomplice in the enemy's camp; but, from the excessive precautions taken by Cara Bey, Stasso feared that such an interview would be impossible, and therefore they determined to trust to their own efforts, hoping for his co-operation when the moment for action should arrive.

Osmond, communicating with Ivanovitch in French, and with Stasso in Greek, had pur-

posely refrained from making Mustafa a party concerned in his scheme; for, through excess of fear, he most likely would have managed to mar its operations. From the moment of his imprisonment, Mustafa seemed to have lost the use of every faculty but that of eating and drinking. He had consigned himself to his *kismet*—his fate, as a mariner, in distress, consigns himself to a floating spar when his ship is about to sink. He sat in a corner, and uttered nothing but now and then a hollow “Allah kerim!” which would protrude from the recesses of his lungs, and give relief to his mind, as a moan may be said to quiet pain. Though he saw that something of importance had taken place, still nothing but “Allah kerim!” seemed in the least to interest him. He contemplated Osmond as a stark-staring madman, and would hold as little converse with him as he possibly could: looking upon himself as the wisest of created beings, because he had warned his master

against Cara Bey ; for now he saw that all his predictions were fulfilled. He endeavoured to submit, in the spirit of a true Mahomedan, to the decrees of predestination ; but he was too infirm of mind to practise so high a virtue. Whilst, on the one hand, he felt sure of being put to death ; on the other, he would be concocting plans for riding post to Constantinople on the very first opportunity,—like one on a swing, who, when flying upwards, looks into the sky, and when downwards, sees the earth ready to receive him.

Cara Bey had abstained from visiting his harem until he had arranged to his satisfaction the whole economy of his castle as it related to the department of the males. He inspected their quarters ; gave attention to the wounded ; had an eye to his stables ; and saw that everything was in proper order for the approaching carousal. He then visited the women. Zabetta received him with the

same appearance of welcome and satisfaction which she had shown upon their first meeting; and had already given such an air of comfort and freshness to the interior of the rooms allotted to the use of the females, that he found a great deal more attraction in this part of his establishment than he had ever done before. He viewed her with delight; was charmed with the brilliancy of her eyes; admired her person; and spoke to her with more confidence and apparent cordiality than he had ever shown to womankind before.

Ayesha still kept herself as secluded as possible. She carefully covered her face, and endeavoured to clothe her whole appearance with that sort of negligence of dress and carriage, which might make her least attractive. Cara Bey, however, anxious to obtain a fair survey of her face, with the rudeness that belongs to a barbarian, forcibly drew back her veil; and there he saw, for the first time, what could not be concealed — that bewitching

harmony of features, that splendid contour of face and profile, and that whole artillery of eyes, brow, colour, and overshadowing hair, which make up the catalogue of beauty, and which must strike the monster as well as the man of refinement. Even his coarse nature was touched, not with desire, nor with love, but with a feeling to him before unknown — a sort of respect and lowliness of bearing: a proof how great is the power of a beautiful woman when she puts on the armour which Nature has provided for her, that of modesty, self-respect, and dignity. He did not intrude himself farther on this occasion, but, as she thrust forward her white and graceful hand to grasp her veil, the ring which Osmond had given her shone conspicuous on her finger.

“What ring is that which your daughter wears?” said he to Zabetta, his jealousy catching fire at the sight. “No maiden ever wears a ring. Where did she get it?”

Upon hearing these questions, Ayesha's colour forsook her cheek, and she shrank within herself from apprehension. "What do I know?" answered Zabetta, quite aware of the mischievous tendency of the enquiry: "I believe it was given to her by her father."

"Let me see it," said Cara Bey; "it looks beautiful." Ayesha would rather have sunk into the earth than have given it up; but recollecting that the Yezidies do not know how to read, she obeyed the commands of her mother, took it from her finger, and delivered it to Cara Bey. Upon seeing letters engraved upon it, he enquired what the writing meant;—both the women were silent. Supposing they too could not read, he without farther ceremony retained the ring, and, leaving them in haste, immediately sent for his Kotchek, who was his scribe as well as his priest.

Having desired the Kotchek to decipher what was inscribed upon the ring, the solemn man, with great swelling of importance, taking

from a little greasy case a pair of old-fashioned spectacles, mounted them upon his nose, and at first sight, without hesitation, pronounced the word “Osman!”

An electric shock could not have produced a greater effect than did the announcement of this name upon Cara Bey. “Osman!” he repeated aloud, as he took back the ring, engrossed with contending feelings—“Osman! May his father and mother be burnt! *Ehi vah!*—See what is fate!” said he, as he muttered to himself, “*Chok chey!*—This is much! Here have I given myself all this trouble, nearly losing my life, all to bring two lovers under one roof, and that roof mine! Wonderful! But the son of a dog does not know Cara Bey yet!”

Upon which, rising up with much agility and haste, the enraged chief left the priest to draw his own conclusions from what he had seen, and, proceeding to the small room near the harem door, immediately sent for

Mariam, the slave who had attended Hassan in his sickness, and whom we have before described as cook to the harem. As soon as she entered, he ordered her with much mystery to close the door, and then said, "Mariam, I have words to say — draw near." The woman approached with fear and trembling ; but although there was timidity in her demeanour, the reader of character might have discovered at the same time that she possessed great firmness and resolution.

"Have you provided all the materials necessary for to-morrow's *ziâfêt*, or feast ?" said he.

"I have, my Aga," replied Mariam.

"We must have great profusion of rice — there is to be pillau in every room, are you aware of that ?"

"I am ; everything is ready at your service."

"Pepper, cinnamon, and other spices, are to abound. Make the pillau of the Lady Zabetta and her daughter very good — Do you hear ?"

“ I will—I will do my best.”

“ There must be lamb, and *keftehs*, and *dolmahs*, and *kavorma*, and all sorts of sweets — all this for the harem, and for my dinner. Do you understand ?”

“ I do—I will do my best, with the blessing of Allah !” said Mariam, with meekness.

“ But now hear what I have to say,” said her master. “ There must be one large, rich, well-boiled, well-spiced pillau, for the prisoners in the adjoining keep.” At these words Mariam put on a look of great anxiety, whilst her master threw his features into the dogged cast of villany appertaining to one who is bent upon the perpetration of some horrid crime.

“ Now listen,” he continued to say : “ when you have made your pillau, which must be boiled in a vessel by itself, you must insert the whole of the powder contained in this paper.” Upon which he took a small parcel from his breast, and gave it to her ; then looking well into her face, he said, “ Mind ye, it

contains poison !” Mariam maintained a fixed and unaltered countenance, for she anticipated the word that was about to be pronounced. “Recollect now, Mariam,” he continued, “I depend upon you ; if you fail, you know me. As soon as you have prepared the pillau, and before you mix it, let me be called. I will not be trifled with. Now mind ye—have your eyes about you—a mistake will be your destruction, as perhaps it may injure me. To-morrow is the day—the next morning will tell me if you have been faithful to your trust :—if you have not—beware !”

Mariam received the paper from his hand without the vibration of a nerve. “Take care of it,” said he ; “I bought it fresh at Kars but the other day, it cannot fail of doing its work.”

“*Bashustun!*—upon my head be it !” said Mariam ; “it shall be as you have commanded.” Upon which she left the room, but, having done so, she felt an oppression at heart, that nearly had induced a fainting-fit.

She caught a glimpse of Hassan, as he was gliding by the door ; for he, too, had been on the watch : they made one of those signals of recognition which are the earnest of a mutual understanding, and, fearing the appearance of their ever suspicious master, both retired to their usual avocations.

It must be here remarked that, on this day, Osmond and his companions were served with a much smaller allowance of provisions than on former occasions. When old Mahmoud the jailor entered their room in the morning, with a melancholy face, for he was in truth a kind-hearted man — “ Here,” said he, “ here is your pittance ! As God is great, our master has forgotten us to-day ; he has not sent us more than will feed one mouth, instead of four. But to-morrow is the feast, and we will then make up for to-day’s starvation.”

Osmond listened to these words with throbbing attention, for he could read in their meaning that Cara Bey’s scheme was in full opera-

tion. "He starves us to-day," said he to himself, "in order that we may be ravenous to-morrow, and eat our way into the other world!" He sighed as he exclaimed, "May the wretch be mistaken! Let us pray to God for strength, and still all may be well." His principal apprehension was, that Hassan might fail him, and that the scheme which he had so generously planned in sickness might be forgotten now that he was restored to health.

Every moment, the time as for action drew near, appeared an age. Ivanovitch was burning with impatience at the bottom of the well. Stasso gathered together what arms they could muster, and put them in proper order; Osmond inspected his cartouch-box, and found several precious cartridges still preserved therein; whilst Mustafa, who was entirely ignorant of what was about to happen, allowed his imagination to run riot in pleasing anticipation of the quantity of rice which he would on the next day have it in his

power to insinuate into his earnestly expectant jaws.

At length the day of festivity arrived—the day decisive of Osmond's fate. The whole castle felt its influence. Every one put on his best clothes, smoked his best pipe, and clothed his face with such smug looks as the barber could best create. In succession all the individuals of the chieftain's gang paid their respects to him, and made the speeches peculiar to Asiatics on occasions of ceremony; whilst he himself, tottering under the richest accumulation of shawls, embroidery, and furs, received their addresses with appropriate dignity. Hassan alone wore not the face of alacrity which the others did; his brow was striped with wrinkles, there was a restlessness in all he did and said which denoted his solicitude. He felt that he had laid the foundation of a scheme which might or might not succeed. Impelled by a strong desire of revenge, he hoped to have an opportunity of gratifying it; but still he was

not quite determined how to act. Ardently wishing to set Osmond free, he was resolved to do so at all hazards, but then he was aware that the key which was to procure his freedom was so strictly watched, that he doubted whether Mariam could take possession of it without its being missed.

The labours of the kitchen throughout the castle began with the early dawn. The food preparing for the multitude was cooked in a separate place, distinct from the kitchens of the harem, where Mariam alone presided. She had undertaken her task with a heavy heart. The circumstance which most weighed with her was, how she could without being observed purloin the key, which was kept in the very chamber and close to the place where Cara Bey was wont to sleep. Every one knew that the key was a key of importance, and none dared touch it for fear of punishment. Mariam had, however, free access to the room, for she occasionally swept it out; and on that morning,

after her master had risen, she had ascertained the key to be in its usual place. Busied in her kitchen, already had she selected the vessel which was to contain the fatal food. The whole operation of cooking began, under the superintendence and amidst the apparent mirth of the ladies of the harem, (Ayesha excepted,) who did not cease going in and out at all moments, too happy to have anything to do which might draw them from the every-day sameness of their lives. Cara Bey himself occasionally looked in, and, casting a mysterious look at Mariam, made himself acquainted with every particular relating to the culinary preparations about to be attended with such awful results. Zabetta, too, who esteemed herself an excellent cook, did not fail to hover about Mariam, and obtrude her advice as she proceeded in her task. "More pepper here, less butter there — boil this longer, bake this less," and such like monitory phrases, came from her with all the officiousness of her nation, and all the volubility of her sex.

At length the moment for serving up the important dish was at hand, Mariam left her kitchen for a minute, and, without being seen by any one, succeeded in securing the key, which she secreted about her person. Cara Bey did not fail to come at the time he had appointed, and, no one else being present, saw with his own eyes the poison mixed with the rice. As he stood over the boiling cauldron, he might well have personified the demon of wickedness mixing up the ingredients of some magic spell. The next thing to be done was to transfer the contents to the large earthen bowl, in which it was to be carried to the prisoners; and this was the critical moment for the exertion of Mariam's ingenuity. She began deliberately with a large spoon to place it in the bowl, but, when she had proceeded half way, she exclaimed, "I hear the new Khanum coming — she will insist upon tasting it." Upon which Cara Bey thrust his head out of the door in order to prevent the intrusion of

Zabetta, and at that moment the intrepid Mariam, drawing forth the key, thrust it so well under the accumulated rice, that no trace of it was to be seen when her master returned.

Without a semblance of suspicion, he then inspected the mess with the same sort of apprehensive feeling that a conspirator might look upon a barrel of gunpowder to which he is about to lay the match preparatory to the conclusive act of his conspiracy. He felt, it is true, that he held the power of life and death in his hands—a power which he had many times before exercised to inflict death; but on this occasion he was aware that his victims were no ordinary men, and that, sooner or later, he might be called to account for his treatment of them. However, resolutely blinding himself to all consequences, he sent for Mahmoud the jailor, and, apparently confiding to him the materials of good cheer instead of the instruments of destruction, ordered him forthwith to carry the smoking meal to his charges,

with a recommendation to eat and be merry : he ordered him, moreover, to leave them to themselves during the whole night, in order that they might meet with no interruption in their festivities.

The old man carried off his burden with exultation. The murderer went his way exulting with a fiendish satisfaction at the success which had attended the secret that he would have kept ; whilst the kind-hearted woman, the intended instrument of his cruelty, ceased from her labours only to anticipate the horrors which might be her fate were she ever detected. Trusting implicitly in the truth and judgment of Hassan, she had, at her interview with him in the sick room, communicated to him the murderous intention of Cara Bey, which the monster had imparted to her by way of trying her firmness ; and had then been so impressed by his eloquence upon the wickedness of the transaction, that she promised to co-operate with him in endeavouring to preserve

the life of the man who had twice saved his, be the consequences what they might. They then formed the plan of secreting the key, and now was come the moment of trial to all parties.

CHAPTER X.

Siward.—This way, my lord ; the castle's gently rendered.

Macbeth.

THE sounds of revelry were already heard throughout the castle, and had reached the ears of the unhappy prisoners. The sun's last rays could just be perceived glancing over the small portion of the distant landscape which could be discerned from the prison window. Osmond was waiting with nervous impatience and excitement for the moment, which he was aware was now nigh at hand, decisive of his own fate, of that of his mistress, and of his companions in wretchedness. Every noise startled him ; the least approach to the door of his prison

awakened his attention. At length the well-known step of Mahmoud was heard. By the deliberation with which he moved, it was evident that something more than ordinary was forthcoming: the key turned in the lock, and, as the door opened, he appeared staggering under the burden of a large dish of the prepared rice, smoking and inviting to the eye, followed by another man who bore a provision of bread, and moreover a copious jug of wine.

“Here, my children,” cried out the old man as his eyes sparkled with delight—“here is food to make your hearts glad. This will make up for your scanty fare of yesterday. The Bey has also sent you wine. You have leave to invite the Muscovite; let us therefore draw him up.”

Upon which, setting down the food, he lowered the rope to Ivanovitch, and, with the help of Mustafa and Stasso, landed him upon the floor.

“And now, my friends,” said he, “*Affiet*

ollah — much pleasure attend you ! I leave you for this whole night : I have orders not to return till to-morrow morning. Here, take this lamp, and so *Allah esmarladek* — God take you into his holy keeping !”

Thus taking his leave, and duly locking and bolting the door after him, he was no more seen for that night.

As soon as they were left to themselves, half-starved as they all were, ravenous and ready to rush upon the food before them, Osmond with stern resolution stood forward, and with extended hands exclaimed —

“ Let no one approach these things at his peril ; they are spread for our death — they are poisoned !”

A dead silence ensued. Mustafa could not and would not believe the words which he heard, and was already sidling towards the wine, such was its magnetic attraction, when Osmond instantly seized upon the jug, and spilled the whole of its contents upon the floor,

saying—"Our safety depends upon our coolness. Mustafa, at your peril, I say, stand away. Trust in me, then all will be well."

The poor Turk, nearly mad with disappointment, and more than famished by excess of anticipation, could almost have slain his master, as he stood with his eyes intent upon the food, his mouth open, and his hands clenched. Osmond was, however, too much taken up with the crisis of his fate to heed him; and of the others, who were acquainted with the secret, he was sure.

"Stasso," said he, "put your hand into the rice, and search out the key."

The faithful servant immediately did as he was commanded: his first attempt was unsuccessful. "It is not here!" said he.

Osmond's cheek became blanched; his arms and hands fell powerless by his side.

"Try again, my Stasso," said he, his voice failing him, and tears gushing into his eyes.

This time Stasso made a desperate grasp,

overthrowing the whole pile, and there, true enough, was the blessed instrument of their deliverance.

“Thanks to God!” escaped from the lips of the sentient Englishman. A silence ensued, as he poured forth a mental prayer. He stood for some minutes motionless, when all at once, as if his prayer had been heard, the glow of energy beamed upon his features and actions, and he said, “Now, my friends, to work; a moment’s delay may prove our destruction. Ivanovitch, are you prepared?” The youth in an ecstasy of joy sprang to his deliverer, embraced him with tears pouring from his eyes, and said, “Let us be gone.”—“Stasso,” said Osmond, “now have your eyes about you; our safety depends upon you. Go; my blessing attends you!” Then leading on to the postern, which in another country, where prisons are better understood, would not have been so easy of access as it was here, he placed the key in the lock, which with a cheering though

grating friction answered to his hand, and to their united joy they saw the open though precipitous rock before them. Stasso stood for some time taking a good survey of the great tract of country encircled by the horizon; and, as there was still a sufficiency of twilight left to enable him to ascertain the direction of the Russian station, exclaimed: "I know my way: trust to me. In four or five hours let us hope we shall be with you again. Let us go."

Upon which, Stasso leading the way and Ivanovitch following, they plunged down the steep side of the mountain, and disappeared. Osmond stood for some time wistfully gazing at the calm and soothing scene, so much at variance with the jarring passions, the loathsome vice, and the actual licentiousness of which the castle was the abode. His heart expanded at the unrestricted view of the extensive scene which met his eyes. Long regions of mountains rose one above the other in receding

ranges, the first strong in outline and depth of shade, the more distant vanishing into vapour which "blended the distant landscape with the sky." The pure atmosphere broken into light clouds everywhere began to glitter with stars, whilst the moon, in a graceful crescent, just shed light enough to throw the imagination into doubt and speculation. Far, far away, the ear occasionally distinguished the baying of a distant watch-dog hovering about some mountain-flock, the property of the wandering tribes so common in this region; or perhaps would be struck by the tone of some drowsy bell denoting the step of the careful camel ranging over the scanty pasturage of the stony plain.

Osmond's feelings almost overpowered him, as he considered what might be his future fate, and in how short a time it was likely to be decided. He might perhaps, he thought, once again be master of himself, free to roam at large over the beauteous surface of the world;

and he trembled with delight at the probability of possessing her for whom alone he lived, enjoying the rapture of changing the whole fashion of her mind, pure and spotless as it was, from the gross errors of her present belief, to the truth of the consolatory and overpowering faith of the Christian.

He would have stood where he was, perhaps, the night through, rapt in deep contemplation, had he not missed Mustafa from his side; and in consequence he rushed back into the prison, fearing lest the poor wretch, overtempted by the food, might have given way to his appetite, and thus found his death. In fact, his foreboding was true; but an instant more, and he might not have been able to preserve him from self-destruction. Like some wolf, maddened with hunger, forcing its way into the baited trap which would lead to its death, so sat Mustafa opposite to the still smoking pillau, occasionally dallying with the dainty morsels which it contained,

and enhancing the urgent demands of his lips by a preliminary negotiation with his nose. At length, giving way to the too violent temptation, he really was about to insert a large handful of rice, meat and all, into his mouth, when Osmond had just time to rush forward, give his rising arm a blow, and thus defeat his fatal intention. The disappointed man positively screamed with impotent rage.

“In the name of Allah!” exclaimed his master, “are you mad? Will you die? Are you not aware you are about to eat poison!”

“How do I know! how can you know!” roared Mustafa like a child deprived of its cake, “whether it be poisoned or not? You want to kill me! You want to starve me! Why am I to starve, when here is food before me?”

“Am I again to tell you,” said Osmond, “that this is poison — poison, man! Do you hear me?”

Upon which he thought it right to relate

the whole story, from beginning to end, of the manner in which this fact had come to his knowledge; and in order to settle the question by a still shorter argument, he took the dish into his hands, and stalking out with it towards the open postern, threw rice, dish and all to the winds, and had the satisfaction of hearing it fall down the precipitous rock.

In the mean while the revels which were to crown the night had begun in Cara Bey's own apartments, which lying contiguous to those of the harem enabled the chief to allow his women to be spectators thereof. They did so through the means of certain small windows which looked from their apartment into that appropriated to the men. Already had his meal been served, during which he drank more than a due portion of his favourite wine. He had invited Hassan to his board, together with the priest, and three or four of his principal officers. They talked long and much of their different feats of prowess — of the

caravans attacked, of the traveller slain, and of the villages invaded. The last expedition was particularly brought under discussion, a subject which naturally led to the object of it, and to the success by which it had been attended.

“By my head!” exclaimed Cara Bey, beginning to be flushed with wine, “we have performed a marvellous feat—but the best of our destiny has been, that, instead of securing one bit of happiness, we have secured two. I don’t know which is best, the mother or the daughter! *Ajaib chey*!—they are wonders both. *Eh, pezevenk*—eh wretch, what do you say?” said he, addressing himself to an old rough marauder, whose tanned face was more like the seat of a well-worn saddle than the seat of intelligence—“what do you say?”

“All I can say, O my Aga,” said the other, “is, that there is none other in the world like you.” Upon which he masticated with

renewed vigour, and drank with fresh impulse.

“ *Hai hai!*—true true!” exclaimed the arrogant chief, “true—Cara Bey is in truth somebody in the world. Of men there are many, of somebodies few. *Bah, bah, bah!*” he continued, chuckling, and shaking his head at the same time with delight and presumption, “they are wonderful creatures—these two women! but the older one, the older one—she is a wonder!”

Hassan heard all with heaviness of heart—his mind was overflowing with a variety of emotions—he could scarcely sufficiently command himself to appear pleased. He thought of the preserver of his life—he was anticipating the results when the discovery of his flight, which he expected, should take place; for he had formed a plan of absconding that very night with Mariam, and seeking the Russian frontier, where he hoped to overtake Osmond, and therefore only longed for the

moment when the festivities would break up, that he might be at liberty to steal away. He watched with satisfaction every progressive cup of wine which flowed down the throat of the chief, for he hoped soon to witness its effects. He would have taken his departure, but he saw the time was not yet come for the dancers and their deafening accompaniment of music being called, and it was necessary to see that part of the entertainment entered upon ere he ventured to stir.

The dance began — two youths, the down of whose chins had scarcely begun to sprout, with hair flowing behind their ears, arrayed in gorgeous fancy-coloured dresses, like those of women rather than men, first stepped forward. They were accompanied by a buffoon, an old Turk with a beard, who held a long candle in his hand, wearing a cap from which emanated a quantity of small tapers, “like quills upon the fretful porcupine,” which being occasionally lighted by stealth by some wag

of the company, were intended to produce mirth when other incentives failed. This constant attendant on such like scenes, probably a descendant from the fabulous satyrs of old, well personified, both in look and calling, one of those ancient worthies. When the dancers performed some feat, or threw themselves into some extravagant contortion, he mimicked or applauded them with still viler action.

The whole exhibition was well suited to the gross taste of the audience; and step by step, from one feat to another, led on to displays of coarseness which none but Asiatics can enjoy. It was accompanied by music and singing, if a concert made up of yells and discordant sounds may be so called, which seemed well adapted to excite the admiration and jollity of the rough men who formed the company, and who, seated round the room in solemn row, might every now and then be discovered through the smoke of their pipes, in the

act of allowing their bearded faces to be cheated out of their habitual gravity.

Renewed sets of performers succeeded each other — more wine was supplied — Cara Bey drank deeper, and, as he roared with approbation, became more and more flushed. Hassan observed that the moment for slipping away unobserved had arrived. He arose and left the room, and soon after quitted the castle with his companion.

Osmond, in the mean while, had passed the time in a state of feverish impatience and excitement, which, perhaps, may be conceived, though difficult to describe. His imagination was conjuring up a thousand fears regarding the dangers to which his mistress might be exposed from the brutality of her oppressor. His ears were struck by the din of the music ; he well knew what it meant, and to what horrors it led : he was fully aware of the excesses by which similar orgies were accompanied ; and when Asiatics, breaking through

their law, gave way to drunkenness, he knew that they then became in appetite lower than the brutes of the field. To think of the shrinking, timid, and lovely Ayesha, and then to dwell upon the gross, lawless, and unrestrained character of the monster in whose power she was, inflamed as he would be by wine and maddened by the licentiousness of the scene then in full action, produced fears and forebodings greater than his reason could well bear.

Every fresh burst of mirth or applause, sounding like the revelry of fiends, excited his renewed apprehensions. He walked to and fro in his prison, swelling with impotent and unavailing rage. He counted the minutes as they passed. Every succeeding quarter, or half, or whole hour, as it revolved on the dial of his watch, was recorded with more than the vigilance of the condemned wretch who is waiting for the last visit of his jailor to conduct him to the scaffold.

Four anxious hours had now elapsed since Stasso and his companion had departed. Osmond took up his station at the postern, hoping that he might hear some indications of their return. He watched with all his senses on the stretch. Sometimes the wind, sweeping over the mountain's side, brought with it, as he thought, the sounds of distant voices; at others, he fancied he heard the clank of arms; and then, through the darkness, his too impatient sight was deluded into a certainty that he saw the forms of approaching men, — but in every instance he was deceived. Nothing was there but Night in all her majesty, Nature in her calm; and all that was now left to him was Hope, with her blessed anticipations.

Returning to his prison, his ear was first struck with what he thought was the shriek of a woman — the blood forsook his heart, a cold tremor ran through his frame: he listened again—all was silent save the eternal din of the hellish music. This fear, this forerunner of

all his apprehensions, was sufficient to rivet him to the window, which was nearly touching, though out of sight of those of the women's apartments. He listened with breathless attention, every now and then turning his head to the postern from which was to come his help. Another shriek struck his ear—this was no longer an illusion; the cry was one of distress, of supplication:—he panted for breath, his heart beat audibly in his breast, he seized his sword, he prayed earnestly to God for pity and assistance. More cries were heard; the music ceased:—his imagination was on fire; his senses had almost left him; he was nearly sinking to the earth with the complication of his sufferings, when he thought he heard from without the clashing of a musket as if striking or trailing against a rock. He revived; his eyes almost started from his head as he looked towards the door. Another louder shriek, which roused his locks into frenzy, brought him to his senses. Again he listened; he staggered towards the

postern ; when all at once his fears were hushed, as he heard the noise of hasty footsteps resounding through the low arch, and immediately after saw the form of Ivanovitch rush into the room, followed by Stasso, panting and exhausted from excess of exertion. Their first impulse was to throw themselves into the arms of Osmond ; they wept like children : Stasso embraced his master's knees, Ivanovitch wrung his hand with the most tender sympathy. Instantly after the room was filled with soldiers—European soldiers—armed from head to foot, as on service.

“Hush, hush !” said Osmond, with a thrill of exultation now running throughout his frame, and gratitude to his Almighty protector pouring through every fibre of his heart, but still ardently impatient to rush to the rescue of his Ayesha, whose voice he was quite certain he had identified with the shrieks which had struck his ear. “Are they loaded ?” was the first question which he asked the gal-

lant young Russian. "They are."—"Fix bayonets!" were the next words spoken, which Ivanovitch addressed to his men. The clang which followed this command threw a renewed impulse of resolution into every one's breast, excepting Mustafa's, who now began to have his eyes opened to the result of the whole proceeding, and who, looking towards the deserted well, would willingly have become its tenant. "Let us draw our swords," cried Osmond, "and, in God's name, let us advance. No blood must be spilled, if possible; mark that, Ivanovitch. I will go first. And now down with the door." Upon that a rush was made against it, and the butt-end of the muskets went manfully to work in securing its fall.

The first intimation which the inmates of the castle received of what was going on in the prison, was the noise proceeding from the blows inflicted on the door. Cara Bey had by this time drunk to such excess that all the brutality of his nature was brought out in its

utmost exuberance. His frame had been so saturated with constant excess in wine, that its power was mitigated ; for he never was so far intoxicated as not to possess a sufficient glimmering of reason to give directions in what might concern himself at the time. He had in vain looked for Ayesha among the women who appeared at the window to witness the revels below ; and although Zabetta had secured to herself the principal share of his attentions, still he felt piqued at the obstinate seclusion of her daughter. In the fulness of his debauchery this feeling flashed across his mind ; he thought himself outraged : his passions were all abroad, he determined to exert his power. Rising from his seat at a time when the dancing and the noise were at their height, he darted through the door which led into the harem, and, going into the room which Ayesha occupied, found her, as usual, seated in a corner, looking through a window which commanded a view of the surrounding

country, and endeavouring to avert her mind from the miseries of her present state of bondage by the contemplation of the night and its calm beauties.

Cara Bey, addressing her in a tone full of insolence, would at once have dragged her away and obliged her to be a partaker of the night's revelry. She resisted at first with mildness, and endeavoured to soften his brutality by timid remonstrance ; but he was not in a humour to be trifled with : he seized her by the hand with violence, and this was the cause of her first shriek. She then pretended to accede to his request, and joined the women in their seat at the window ; but as soon as she became aware of the horrors of the scene which she was called upon to witness, she abruptly retired. Cara Bey again went in pursuit of her, and his violence called forth more cries. Having torn off her veil in the struggle, her whole beautiful face and bewitching form caught his eye, and from one act of violence he was proceeding to ano-

ther, when the indignant maiden thought of the friendly dagger which lay in concealment at her side, and, as she invoked the name of her lover, placed her hand upon its hilt, still unseen by Cara Bey, hoping, however, that he would soon desist from urging his brutal suit.

He was in this stage of his depravity, when a messenger came rushing in, with mouth open and eyes scared, to tell him of the noise which was heard at the prison-door. The excited, half-drunken, half-conscious chief, received this announcement by taking a pistol from his girdle and firing it off at the messenger; at the same time, breaking into a fiendish laugh, he exclaimed, "Ha! the poison works, does it! They want to frighten me before they die!"

These words catching the ears of Ayesha, at once awoke all her fears, and, as the fatal horror burst upon her astonished senses, she screamed out with all the frenzy of madness. The monster, who held her in his power, calmly looked

at her as if he enjoyed her woe, hugging himself in the ingenuity with which he had got rid of a rival. She writhed with agony; she fell at his feet, imploring his mercy for her Osmond;—her cries brought all the harem about her. The reason of her distress soon becoming known, a burst of horror against the murderer came from the assembled women. He became furious, his passions were uncontrollable; the screams increased. Ayesha was now thrown into a state, of which the next stage would have been hopeless madness.

The monster having approached her, his demon-eyes glaring, his hand outstretched to seize, she had at length clutched and unsheathed her dagger-blade—the frenzy had risen to its crisis—when the harem-door was dashed open with a sudden crash, and Osmond, sword in hand, rushed in like a descending angel from heaven sent to protect the wretched. Quicker than lightning he perceived the situation of his mistress, and beheld her ruthless oppressor.

He roared out with a voice of thunder, "Miscreant, stay! — I am here!" The wretch, in a bewilderment of every sense, immediately drew his second pistol, and with a trembling hand fired at Osmond without effect; the next moment he was felled to the ground by the intrepid youth. And thus, from being one whose very name produced terror and apprehension, he became at once a lost and powerless man.

But who can hope to describe the rapturous scene which took place between the lovers! From the depths of almost utter despair, they found themselves at once raised to the summit of every joy—of every hope! Ayesha looked upon her deliverer as a supernatural being: she would almost have sunk on her knees and worshipped him, so intense was the gratitude which beamed in her heart for having been saved from the wretch who had imprisoned her!

Osmond was never before so enthralled by the charms of his mistress. Her heroism, her

humility, and her beauty, combined to endear her to him more than ever ; and when he reflected that, in protecting her, he might perhaps be rescuing from barbarism one who was born to all the advantages of civilization, the success which had crowned his enterprise made his heart doubly grateful. Zabetta was in a state of amazement : this sudden change in her fortunes deprived her for the moment of all power of thought and action, and for once her spirit of intrigue and her volubility were checked by the imposing presence of Osmond.

The other women of the harem, who had acquired much experience in the ways of the robber, and had witnessed scenes of the same character as that which had just passed before their eyes, saw in the conqueror only a new master, and at once prepared themselves to obey him, as before they had obeyed Cara Bey. They immediately busied themselves in endeavouring to make their services acceptable to Osmond ; who, on his side,

never having anticipated this sudden acquisition of so large a family of wives, shrank from their attentions with the same repugnance that a newly-arrived traveller eludes the proffered offers of officious landlords ; and being ever scrupulous of shocking the prejudices and customs of the nation among whom he sojourned, he determined to observe and maintain the sanctity of the harem even in this lawless den of the mountain-robber. However much against his inclination, therefore, for he willingly would have prolonged his interview with his beloved Ayesha, he withdrew from the women's apartments, and, placing a guard over them, retired to seek that rest which his exhausted frame so much required.

Having given every requisite order for securing the person of Cara Bey, establishing a proper watch over his adherents, as well as releasing from captivity all those who might be confined within the walls of the castle, he retired to rest for the night.

CHAPTER XI.

A mesure que le Calife allait en avant, on lui présentait toutes sortes d'objets pitoyables, des aveugles, des demi-aveugles, des messieurs sans nez, des dames sans oreilles.

Vathek.

THE capture of Cara Bey's castle had been effected without bloodshed, and with very little resistance. The sudden appearance of the Russian soldiers had so taken the garrison by surprise, that although some few had gathered themselves together, and drawn their swords by way of resistance, yet, deprived as they were both of the orders of their chief and the cheering voice of his lieutenant, they soon grew disheartened; and when they afterwards heard that Cara Bey was seized and

a prisoner, they dispersed, and only studied how to secure their own safety. The confusion which ensued may perhaps be imagined. In a few minutes after the entry of the Russians, the assembled throng, which had before almost choked every avenue to the seat of revelry, had disappeared. The dancers and musicians, sweeping before them the old buffoon, the Yezidi priest, the half-drunken guests, the richly-dressed attendants — all had sought safety in rapid flight, and, almost rolling one over the other in their descent from the upper apartments to the lower courts, only stopped when they found themselves without the walls of the castle. The few who thought of making resistance, seeing their hopeless situation, also determined upon retreat; and thus, before the morning broke on the following day, the scene which had so recently rung with revelry and swarmed with drunkards, was silent and deserted. A dead stillness had taken the place of turbulent

merriment, and the vermin had been dispersed without the necessity of smoke.

Osmond, on retiring for the night, was much surprised that Hassan had not made his appearance. His first enquiry in the morning was for him, but to his still greater surprise he was nowhere to be found. Anxious to have made him a partaker of his success, to have received his advice upon many points relating to the castle, and, more than all, to have made him the medium of releasing the captives, he was greatly disappointed at his absence, particularly as he could nowhere gain any intelligence whither he had fled. Old Mahmoud, the jailor, had therefore been commissioned to open the prison-gates; and perhaps never had the course of any hero's adventures been cheered by so happy a moment as was Osmond's on this occasion.

The flocking out of the prisoners from their cells presented a scene of stirring interest. Individuals of many of the countries of Asia

made their appearance in rotation, most of them in different stages of misery ; some naked and cripples, others mutilated ; some half-famished, many sick and dying ; all a living monument of the cruelty and rapacity of the ferocious man into whose hands they had fallen.

From one cell in the court was seen to issue an old Turk, nearly bent double with age, but whose eye denoted intellect, and whose firm step still announced strength, — his first question upon seeing the light of Heaven may perhaps bring to the recollection of some of our readers a personage with whom they have before been acquainted : — “ What is the price of lambskins at Constantinople ? ” said the old Omar Aga to one who he thought might have come from the capital. He had been seized by Cara Bey’s gang at the last attack of a caravan, and as he was not sufficiently active to escape, he and his several loads of Bokhara lambskins had become the prey of the spoiler.

He had seated himself quietly with his back

against the wall, scarcely exhibiting any surprise at this sudden change ; so true a disciple of predestinarianism was he, for he received the good and the evils of life with almost the same spirit of unconcern, and sat there waiting to see what would happen next. And it was pleasant to observe the meeting which took place between him and a middle-aged man, a Persian, who, issuing from another cell, seemed overjoyed at seeing him, by the many and various manifestations of delight which he made. He eyed the old man with pleasure, inspected the whiteness of his beard, looked at it with the eye of a connoisseur, asked many questions, and evinced much genuine feeling on finding that they had regained their liberty. This was a certain traveller and adventurer, who, having served the Shah in various countries, had been despatched by his majesty to Constantinople to purchase for him an assortment of gold-spangled silks, satins, and brocades, for the dresses of the ladies of his seraglio. He had

travelled as far as the Savanlu mountain with great success, where he had been stopped and plundered by Cara Bey, who would have been satisfied with the possession of his rich goods, not thinking him either worth the killing or the keeping, had he not spoke loftily of the power of his Shah, of his own inviolability as his ambassador, and of other rights belonging to his person, about which Cara Bey knew but little and cared less, but which he thought might be as well suppressed in one of his dungeons, until he should be more enlightened upon the subject.

From a third place of confinement issued three Jews, who were travelling from Bagdad to Arzeroum with the produce of the successful clippage of gold coin, which they intended to lay out in copper to sell at the capital. Their riches were so easily secreted about their persons that the robber had been foiled ; but he chose to keep them for the ransom which they might probably fetch. They had

lived so well at free cost during the time their imprisonment lasted, that they rather rejoiced in its duration than otherwise, since the gain was thus all on their side. With them had been immured an Armenian bishop, whom Cara Bey had stolen as he strayed from the walls of the monastery of Etch Miazin, and who was conveying a certain portion of the holy oil manufactured by the patriarch to the monks at Van. Many others issued from different parts of the castle; many who had been imprisoned from sheer wantonness and caprice; many from the hope of ransom, and others again from policy. As soon as they were congregated, they were led by Mahmoud, instigated by Stasso, (who was not willing that his master should lose the credit of the benefits which he had conferred,) to the foot of the stairs which led into the upper part of the castle; and when Osmond appeared before them as their deliverer, he had the satisfaction of receiving their united expressions of thanks

and gratitude, and hearing their prayers for his future happiness. But what was their joy and their astonishment when he ordered the warehouse, in which all the accumulated spoils were preserved, to be thrown open, and every man to select his own, previously to a final departure ! Omar Aga on this occasion breathed forth “ *Shukiur Allah !*—praises to God !” as he reclaimed his packs of lambskins. The Persian, in regaining possession of his spangled stuffs, felt that he had saved his heels from a bastinado, and that he might again hope to have made his face white before his royal master. The Armenian bishop received back his oil ; the Jews alone carried away nothing, although they willingly would have appropriated to themselves certain unclaimed bales, and thus realized the best venture they had ever made, had they not been stopped by Mahmoud, who had an eye to them himself.

Osmond ordered that beasts, of which many were found in the stables of the castle, should

be provided for those who were in want of them; and every man, upon loading his goods, took his departure rejoicing. He ordered also that Cara Bey's women, who were natives of the Kurdistan, and whose homes were principally in the villages of the neighbourhood, should be provided with every necessary and comfort which the castle afforded, and be conducted thither in safety, giving to each such a share of the robber's wealth as he thought in justice she was entitled to. But still, after having made all these and other arrangements, he found himself much perplexed what to do with the castle itself and all it contained. He was anxious to leave it as soon as possible; and all things considered, like the sailor in nautical history, he was determined never to take a castle again as long as he lived. He was, however, much relieved when he heard that a large detachment of Russians was seen in full march towards the principal entrance, and soon after was charmed to hear

Ivanovitch inform him that it was commanded by a superior officer, a major, who had proceeded on this service the moment he had heard of the circumstances of his, Ivanovitch's, expedition.

As soon as this officer appeared, Osmond immediately delivered over to him the whole and entire possession of the castle ; stating that he thought it justly due to those who had been the means of taking it, that they should have the disposal of it, begging at the same time protection for himself, Zabetta, Ayesha, and his and their attendants, and liberty to depart wheresoever they might choose to travel.

This was freely and joyfully granted. The Russians treated Osmond with every consideration, for they saw in him one who had opened to them an easy path to distinction ; and by the capture of this rock and castle, they hoped that that object of their ambition, a bit of ribbon and a cross, would soon be an appendage to their dress.

But there was one object still left to be disposed of, and that was Cara Bey himself.

On the night of the seizure of Cara Bey, Osmond, having ordered him first to be bound hand and foot, had made him over to the custody of Mustafa, being quite certain that he could not be placed in more watchful hands. And indeed, if, during the commotion and bewildering excitement of that night, any one could have given heed to the proceedings of that personage, he would have found abundant amusement. Never was the fable of the sick lion and the ass so thoroughly illustrated.

When the first rush of the soldiers, headed by Osmond and Ivanovitch, took place after the breaking down of the prison-door, Mustafa, remaining behind, retired as far as he could from the scene of action, until he found himself close to the open postern. There he fixed himself, with one foot on the threshold and the other on the rock, lending a most attentive ear to every sound, and drawing conclusions

as to the probable result of the contest then going on, — ready either to run away or to advance, as it might best suit his safety. At length, when he found that no one seemed disposed to return, he stole quietly on tiptoe to the room he had left. No one was there ; silence reigned in the castle. He proceeded onwards, warily, but with more confidence. He then found himself at the door of the harem. Still he heard but little noise ; women's voices were all he could distinguish. He opened the door quietly, and there, the first thing which greeted his eyes was Cara Bey—that demon which had haunted his thoughts, sleeping or waking—that one black spot in his apprehension—there he was, pinioned and a prisoner ! Osmond was standing over him with a drawn sword, whilst Ivanovitch and Stasso were tying his hands behind his back and otherwise securing him. Mustafa's courage rose in a moment at this sight — he became all at once several inches taller.

“Ah, Mashallah!” he exclaimed, “we have done well! we will not let that fellow escape again. Did not I tell you that you do not know these rascals? He would have killed us all, and poisoned us like rats if he could, but we were too much for him.—Ah, Mashallah!” looking at the fallen wretch, who, in sullen and dogged mood, seemed to have been struck by sudden fatuity—“Ah, Mashallah!” said Mustafa to him, “I thought you were a man! Such a one I want for my harem. Arise—will you go?”

This was the greatest torment which Cara Bey had hitherto endured. His eyes glared horribly, and his teeth gnashed with fury.

“You worship the devil, do you?” said Mustafa, giving his elbows an extra twist; “let us see; will he come to you? No, no! rather say now, ‘*Lahnet be sheitan!*—curses on satan!’ That is what you must say.”

Again the infuriated Cara Bey, taunted by this insignificant portion of a man, would have

torn him to pieces had it been in his power to do so ; but he was obliged to endure his misery until Osmond, having seen the wretch well secured, said to his Tatar, “ Now, Mustafa, take that man under your care ; if we fall again into his hands, it will be your fault.”

Mustafa lost no time in doing as he was ordered, and did not hesitate for a moment how to dispose of him. He led him immediately into the room in which he, his master, and Stasso, had been confined ; and, giving himself all the airs of the governor of the castle, called with authority for old Mahmoud, and then, with his help, having passed a rope round the body of Cara Bey, lowered him down into the well, from which Ivanovitch, his former victim, had so recently been drawn. Mustafa immediately took his seat at the very orifice of the well, loaded his pistols, drew his yatagan, and there remained fixed, ready to annihilate his prisoner at the very first symptom of an attempt to escape.

When Osmond had made over the castle to the Russian commanding officer, he wished to dispose of his prisoner in the same manner ; but he was not at first aware in what place Mustafa had deposited him. After some search, however, Mustafa was discovered in the position above described, like a cat at the door of a mouse-trap, watching its every motion with undiminished attention.

The moment Mustafa was called upon to give up the charge of his prisoner, all his fears returned as if he actually saw him loose before his eyes. Nothing could persuade him to relinquish the post, or the charge which he had undertaken, until his master came to an explanation with him.

“ You would not let him loose upon us again alive,” said Mustafa, “ would you ? ”

“ I will not kill him, certainly,” said his master ; “ he has been deprived of all power of doing further mischief, and more punishment I cannot inflict upon him.”

“ But recollect,” said Mustafa, “ if he be set free, he may turn robber again, and then his first object will be to twist my neck off. As you love your soul, my Aga, do not let us turn fools again, now that we have got on the right side of wisdom.”

“ I must ever recollect,” answered Osmond, “ that, but for his help through his lieutenant and his men, and but for his horses, I might to this day have been in prison at Kars. Although he would basely have taken my life, yet he was once partly accessory in saving it, the death therefore which he so richly deserves shall never come to him through my hands. I will deliver him over to those who have a greater right to his person than I have ; let them deal with him as they choose.”

“ But they are asses too !” said Mustafa. “ It is only our Turks who know how to deal with such like fellows. They seize their sword, spit in their hand, cry out ‘ *Y'allah*,—in the name of the Prophet !’ and then, with one back-

handed slice, take off the head as clean as if they had cut a cucumber in twain."

All this conversation took place at the orifice of the well during the time preparations were making to draw the miserable wretch from it. When he at length was landed, it would almost have melted the heart of those who were ignorant of his crimes, to witness the misery of his demeanour. The whole demon was still painted on his features; but, overcoming his fierceness, he was now become abject, fawning, and full of servility. Seeing Osmond before him, attended by the Russian major, he fell at his feet in a most imploring attitude, disgusting in any man, and doubly so in one who but the day before had swelled with arrogance, and had made his power subservient to every infamous purpose.

"O my soul! my lord! my pasha!" exclaimed the fallen man. "Oh, forgive, forgive me! I have been in fault: I have eaten

much abomination. Here is my head ; strike : take all I have ; but let me entreat of you not to deliver me up to the Moscovites. Do with me what you like : I will take all from you. You are my father,—my mother ; I have only you in this world as my sanctuary. Will you allow me to be dragged from it ? Englishmen are men : they know how to forgive. Oh, forgive your slave ! I will become your servant for the rest of my life ; but oh, do not—do not give me over to mine enemies.”

To all these nauseous supplications Osmond opposed a stern and decisive countenance.

“ Were I willing to listen to your wishes,” said he, “ I could not ; for here,” pointing to the Russian officer, “ here is your master. You must account for your conduct to his countrymen, whom you have so frequently outraged. I have no other course to pursue than to deliver you over to him.”

In vain did the abject wretch continue his entreaties. Osmond heeded not his words ; but, having delivered him over to the guard appointed to watch over him, he left him, in order to make the necessary arrangements for his own departure, and for that of Ayesha and her mother. But, previously to taking this step, it was necessary that he should have an interview with them, in order to ascertain from their own lips what might be their wishes ; for, however much his thoughts might be engrossed in the future well-being of Ayesha, still he was determined not to control her wishes, or put any violence upon her inclinations.

Zabetta had now had time to collect her ideas, and form schemes adapted to the new turn which her affairs had taken. It was as easy for her to turn her affections from one object to another, as it is for the weathercock to revolve on its pivot at the smallest change of wind. Cara Bey's short reign being over, her former scheme was succeeded by a deter-

mination to take possession of Osmond himself: she resolved to wean him from his love to her daughter, and to excite it for herself; or, if that should fail, in a Russian camp, she imagined, there would be no want of competitors for her preference. She argued thus:—She had been a Mahomedan, she determined to be again a Greek. She was now going among those who professed her original faith; she would return to that faith. Who was there now to check her resolution? Old Suleiman, who might have controlled her, was far away. As for the Mufti, his sacks and his drowning, he was welcome to throw any one into the river but herself.

But the object of all her wild dreams, and such it had been ever since she had witnessed the daily increasing beauty of Ayesha, was the getting to Constantinople—the enslaving of the Sultan in person with her daughter's charms, and securing to herself the high situation of mother to the reigning

favourite. This hope she now felt was about to be realized. If she could but persuade Lord Osmond to follow up the project of returning to Stamboul, which he told her he had in view, she felt she could desire nothing more ; and she longed for an opportunity of trying her best entreaties upon him for that purpose.

Ayesha, ever since her release from the violence of Cara Bey and her deliverance by her lover, had passed her time in such a state of happiness that it almost bordered on delirium. Although still subject to the confinement of a Turkish harem, she was far from complaining ; she knew no other mode of life. She would have shrunk from the impropriety of being left under no restraint. But although she could not see him for whom she would lay down her life, although she did not wish to see him, yet still she knew him to be there, ever on the watch for her welfare. She placed such devoted confidence in him, loved

him with an ardour so blind, though still repressed, that that feeling alone sufficed for her happiness. She knew he would judge for the best, and act for the best. All that she had to do was to attend to his wishes and follow his bidding : how could she better show her devotion? There was only one drawback to her happiness, and that was the recollection of him whom she had ever called her father, old Suleiman Aga at Kars. From habit, from a feeling of gratitude, and from a thousand other causes, she was attached to him : father is an endearing word ; it reminded her of the duties of a child to a parent, which are so strictly enjoined among Mahomedans, and she occasionally longed to be present with him, in order to assure him of her existence and her safety. Still she was well acquainted with the quality of his mind ; she was aware of the apathy and indifference of his character ; and thus she felt consolation in the conviction that although he might have lamented her loss at

first, still every regret would ultimately give way before the fascinations of his pipe and his habitual submission to the decrees of fate.

Osmond having desired to see Ayesha and her mother, they appeared before him, properly veiled, at the door of the harem. Zabetta at first began to try the whole artillery of her eyes upon him, dropping her veil, and making use of every art which Asiatic coquettes are apt to do when they wish to make a conquest; but she soon found that such manœuvres were entirely thrown away. Osmond opened the object of the interview by asking her whither she wished to bend her steps in the present posture of her affairs?

She was so awed into respect by his manner, and by the decision and gallantry of his late conduct, that she at once assumed an appearance of rectitude. She said that, if she were to return to Kars, she must ever be looked upon, after what had taken place, as a degraded woman, and that to such a mortification she never

could submit. She had long deplored her error in having abjured her faith, and to that faith she now wished to return. Could she but once reach Constantinople, she made no doubt that, under his protection, she might be restored to her parents and her own home, and that was the object nearest her heart : if he would help her in its attainment, she asked no other boon at his hands.

This was the language most likely to win Osmond's approval, and to her request he without further hesitation gave his ready assent, particularly as in fact it accorded with his own inclination. Finding her in a mood which appeared to him reasonable and tractable, he thought he could not have fallen upon a better opportunity of extracting from her some information upon a subject which was ever uppermost in his mind—the real history of Ayesha. He said to her, “Zabetta, I have no wish to pry into your secrets, or to insist upon your disclosing to me anything which you may wish

to conceal ; but as you love Ayesha, tell me, am I to believe that she is really your daughter, and the daughter of Suleiman Aga ? I have reasons for suspecting that some mystery hangs over her, and that you are able to dispel it. Speak to me as you would to a friend."

Zabetta, taken unawares, drew her veil over her face to cover her confusion, and answered in a half-angry, half-taunting manner, "Not my daughter, say you ! how could you ever dream that she is not my daughter ? Whence can your suspicions arise ? what have you ever seen to make you believe that she is not my daughter ?"

"My suspicions are mainly founded, laying aside other considerations, upon a casual sight which I obtained of a trinket suspended around her neck, with some coins used in my country. It is a trinket made by English workmen, and must have belonged to English people. May I ask you how it fell into your hands ?"

“Oh, that talisman !” said Zabetta, with some perplexity, but with more assurance ; “that was given to me by Suleiman Aga when first we married : he bought it of some Franks, when he was an attendant upon the governor of Athens. The coins came into his possession at the same time.”

“But the handkerchief?” eagerly remarked Osmond : “I also casually saw a handkerchief, which, I am sure, must have belonged to some one of my countrymen—tell me how you became possessed of that?”

Here Zabetta was evidently much puzzled for an answer, and, after making several attempts at explanation, at length swore that she had bought it in the bazaar, and that, although it might be made of European linen, it was sewn by herself.

However little Osmond might be convinced by what she said, he was obliged to remain satisfied on this occasion with her very unsatisfactory answers. He hoped time would

bring to light that which at present was hid in obscurity. He did not prolong his interview farther than to give her directions about their departure, which was fixed for the morrow. It was determined that they should proceed, in the first place, to the nearest Russian station, escorted by such troops as were unnecessary to garrison the castle, and then travel to the head-quarters of the Russian commander-in-chief in Georgia.

At parting, Osmond availed himself of the opportunity to pour forth every feeling of his heart to his devoted mistress, which she returned in a manner that exalted her in his esteem more, if possible, than ever.

CHAPTER XII.

A la pointe du jour suivant, on ouvrit les grands battans des portes du palais, et le convoi se mit en marche.

Vathek.

ON the following morning, at an early hour, everybody was astir in the castle. The sounds of the animating drum, the clash of arms, the appearance of soldiers in marching order, everything so much reminded Osmond of Europe, that Asia and her barbarous inhabitants appeared all at once to have vanished, and he felt restored to his own place in the world. The procession was opened by the infantry, in the centre of which was placed the prisoner, Cara Bey, who, casting his eyes about him as he bade adieu to all his by-gone power and possessions, afforded a melancholy, though impres-

sive, spectacle of the instability of human affairs. Osmond and the Russian officers, attended by Stasso, and Mustafa, who, once again seated on the saddle, seemed to have left behind him all his fears and miseries, followed next in order. The women, at some small distance, duly guarded and attended, brought up the rear ; and never, perhaps, were met a gayer set of hearts (the prisoner's excepted) than were collected together on this occasion.

The day broke with unusual splendour, and the vast scene which developed itself as they issued from the castle-gates, acted upon the spirits through the medium of the eyes, in the same manner as the examination of divine truths does upon the understanding. The summits of the mountains were receiving their first crimson tints from the rising sun ; the snow-capped cone of Ararat was streaked with most delicate tints of pink, rose, and vermillion, whilst its roots were still embedded in

darkness. The eastern clouds nearest the sun, receiving the brightest touches, shone in the most brilliant hues of gold and amber; whilst those more distant were still in shade, although, as the light gradually fell upon them, they soon partook of the general refulgence. The plain was involved in misty shadows, waiting in its turn for the enlivening presence of the great harbinger of warmth and light; and as the procession wound along the sides of the castle-cone, each individual in his turn, as the sun shone upon him, received the sharp lights on the one side of his person, whilst the other still remained in undefined shade.

After such adventures as those which Osmond had encountered, in which he had undergone every vicissitude, from the fear of death to the restoration of all which he held most dear, such a scene as this was felt with more than usual delight: his inmost soul glowed with gratitude; he enjoyed his existence; the very act of inhaling the purity of the morning air

being of itself sufficient to produce unmixed rapture. What then, thought he, will be that state of existence, when such pleasures will be enjoyed, unalloyed by any mixture of human passions and human cares, when our sole occupation will be the rapturous contemplation of the glories of that Being who called us into life !

They proceeded straight to the nearest Russian station—a spot which brought to the minds of Cara Bey, Osmond, and Ivanovitch, though with different feelings, the recollection of that event which had led to the present state of things : here they stopped. One of the first objects which met their sight as they were crossing the ravine, was Hassan. This circumstance to Cara Bey was bitterness and anguish ; to Osmond it gave unmixed satisfaction. The one glared at him, as he crossed his path, with the eyes and countenance of a demon ; the other received him with all the demonstrations of the sincerest friendship. Hassan soon re-

lated his story : his evasion from the castle, with his companion Mariam, had been most successful ; but his disappointment at not meeting Osmond as he had expected, would have driven him to madness, had not the appearance of Stasso and Ivanovitch, which had taken place before his arrival, explained the whole state of the case. He would have returned immediately to the castle had his feet enabled him so to do ; but he still felt the effects, and perhaps would through life, of that fatal bastinado. He expressed his joy so naturally and unaffectedly at the result of their enterprise, offering himself as an attendant upon Osmond as long as he should remain in this part of Asia, and altogether showed such genuine feeling, that Osmond was quite at a loss how to repay him in any adequate manner for his kindness and his services. He invited him, at all events, to proceed with them to the headquarters of the Russian commander-in-chief, where something might be done in furtherance

of any views of his own which he might have ; and proposed that Mariam should be taken into the service of Zabetta and Ayesha as their waiting-maid. This scheme being agreed to, after a short stay at the Russian station, the travellers set off again to seek the head-quarters of the commander-in-chief, under the escort of Ivanovitch, who commanded the small detachment sent in charge of the prisoner. His appointment to this service had been made at the immediate desire of Osmond, who thus might have an opportunity of expressing to the Russian general the great obligations he was under to his gallant young friend, as well as of securing to him the glory both of the capture of the castle, and of the person of the noted Cara Bey.

At the time we speak of, the Russians were in full possession of the whole of Georgia, and had extended their conquests nearly as far as the range of the Aligez mountains ; an extension which at this day includes Erivan and its

fertile plain, with the Araxes for its boundary. They were then at war with Persia. The Russian commander-in-chief was expected to leave Tiflis, the capital of Georgia, about this time, at the head of an army, to march to the southward, in order to establish itself on the Persian frontier; and it was a question whether our travellers would reach him before he left Tiflis, or meet him in his camp. They reached Gumri on the first day, where they found a considerable garrison; and in succession, passed several nights on the road, after having crossed a difficult country, full of abrupt mountain-passes, everywhere exhibiting remains of its ancient consequence, and abounding in the finest mountain-scenery. Various were the reports which they heard on the road, of the motions of the Russian army. One traveller, coming straight from Tiflis, asserted that it was still in its cantonments at that place. Another, whom they met not long after, said that he had seen it on its march;

and a third swore, he had passed through its encampment near the Bambek river, but two days before.

At length it was ascertained that the last traveller had spoken the truth, and, moreover, that the commander-in-chief was with the army in person. This being the case, Osmond suggested the propriety of sending a messenger in advance to announce the approach of the prisoner Cara Bey, as well as those who accompanied him, in order that preparations might be made for their reception—a suggestion to which Ivanovitch immediately consented. In furtherance of it, he determined himself to proceed, leaving a subaltern in command of the escort during his absence.

On the morning when the travellers expected to reach the camp, every one was seen arranging his dress and equipage to the best advantage, preparatory to entering upon a scene so novel as that which an European army would be sure to present. Osmond in vain wished that

he now had in his possession the clothes which he had left behind him at Kars, and which had become the prey of the Pasha and the Mufti. His uniform would at once have secured him protection and consideration, and have announced without any further explanations that he was an Englishman; but when he looked upon the clothes which he wore, soiled, old, and weatherworn, and which gave him so thoroughly the appearance of an Oriental, he despaired to explain to the Russian commander, in such a manner as to secure his entire conviction, that he was what he pretended to be. It was plain that, unless some lucky circumstance intervened in his favour, he would be taken for a spy. The disguise which he wore could secure him no consideration, and the delay which might elapse ere he could procure testimonials of his identity, might perhaps be subversive of all his future schemes. However, as he felt that he had much to say for himself, he only hoped that in the Russian

commander-in-chief he might be lucky enough to meet with an enlightened and an upright man, and then he made no doubt that his case, if properly represented, would carry conviction of its truth.

At length the approaches to the camp became manifest; stragglers were seen; cattle grazed on the mountain-sides; the advanced posts were observed on the crests of the hills, and distant smoke marked its site. Having ascended a hill of some height, all at once the camp broke upon the view. Thousands of pavilions, white as snow, extended themselves along a valley, which seemed to have been carpeted with the greenest turf expressly for their reception. On all sides arose mountains of the most picturesque forms, green to their very summits, only here and there broken by masses of a red earth, which contrasted richly with the universal verdure. The Bambek, a broad and tranquil river, flowed past majestically, skirted here and there by light and elastic trees, and

gave a charm to the whole landscape, which, though wild when untenanted, now seemed the abode of civilization and pleasure.

Sounds which were unknown to many of the travellers, and which had long been forgotten by others, broke delightfully upon the ear as they approached, cheering the latter with recollections of the past, and the former with the promise of coming pleasure. Military music streamed through the air; the beating of drums, the shrill fife, the swelling trumpet, combined with occasional shouts, the neighing of horses, the traffic of wheeled carriages, and all the busy hum of men, together made up such a congregation of sounds, that those who had but lately left far-distant scenes, felt that they were approaching quite a new order of things.

Ivanovitch had made the best use of his time, for he was the first person to greet Osmond as he entered the camp, and to conduct him to a set of tents prepared for his reception. A separate pavilion was appropriated to the

women, whilst Cara Bey was secured as a prisoner, and placed under the superintendence of a guard. He informed Osmond that the commander-in-chief had expressed himself surprised and delighted at the unexpected event which had rendered him master of Cara Bey's person and castle, and was anxious to see Osmond the earliest moment it would be convenient to him.

Osmond could not conceal from Ivanovitch the awkwardness which he felt in not being able to appear in his own dress, and of the difficulty which he feared he should have in convincing his chief that he was not an impostor. The young Russian, who had never taken this into consideration, agreed that the General was always severe upon the subject of passports, but he hoped that on this occasion, in consideration of the services which Osmond had rendered, he would wave his usual strictness on that head. They proceeded together to the commander-in-chief's quarters. They made

their way through a crowd of brilliantly-dressed officers who were in attendance, and who seemed inclined to pay but little respect to one of Osmond's appearance, whilst they greeted his conductor with every demonstration of attention.

At length Osmond, accompanied by Ivanovitch, was ushered into the presence of his Excellency. He found him a fine old man, of most prepossessing appearance, of mild and conciliatory manners, attired in the full dress of a general, decked with every imaginable order of chivalry, hat in hand, and sword by his side, his whole official costume being such as he would assume when about to receive one of the highest rank.

Osmond was not slow in observing that he rather drew back when he perceived one of his sorry appearance enter ; for Turks, Persians, and Orientals in general, are accustomed to be held very cheap by their powerful neighbours, and, as he could not in his dress exhibit the least token of being an European, so it is not

extraordinary that the General could not at first sight believe him to be such. He was about to send for his interpreter, when Osmond in some measure dispelled the first difficulty by addressing him in very good French, and straightway entering into an explanation of the reasons which obliged him to appear thus disguised. He then gave as short an account as he could of the various circumstances which had thrown him into the hands of Cara Bey, and of those which had led to the seizure of the latter, and to the fall of his castle, in which he gave the whole merit to the gallantry and conduct of the young Ivanovitch; and finished by requesting that he might be permitted to proceed on his journey to Constantinople, together with his servants and the women who were under his protection.

The old General, who, during the whole course of his life and campaigns, had never heard any story like that which had just been related to him, in which love, war, murder,

poisoning, religion, and demonology, were mixed up in such various profusion, opened his eyes and ears with astonishment and curiosity, as Osmond proceeded; and, ere he finished, dropped his features into a look of doubt, shaking his head at the same time with incredulity. "All this, sir, may be true, and I make no doubt it is so," said the General, "but, during my long life, allow me to say, I have never heard any thing like it."

"I doubted very much," said Osmond frankly, "whether my story would gain credence; all I can say is, that my best documents to ensure belief are—first, the delinquent whom I have brought prisoner; secondly, his castle, which is now in your possession; thirdly, the women, the victims of his villany; and, fourthly, this young gentleman, who has been a witness, a more than unwilling witness to the winding up of my story. More I cannot say."

"But, sir," said the General, "however ready I may be to believe you, you must

doubtless be possessed of some passport which will assure me that in your person I see my Lord Osmond, an English nobleman, the heir to a great house. Excuse my request ; in times of war we are obliged to be very circumspect."

"I have nothing to show beyond a Turkish firman," said Osmond, "with which I have travelled throughout Asia. It never occurred to me that I should have occasion to enter the Russian territories, or else I should have provided myself with a passport from our ambassador at Constantinople."

"I fear," said the General, "I cannot be satisfied with such a document. My government is inexorable on the subject of passports ; we must devise some mode of procuring you one."

Osmond looked upon the delay which was likely to proceed from his want of a passport with dismay ; but, adopting the suggestion of the General, who said that he should be satis-

fied with a pass from the English minister at the court of Persia, with whom he was in correspondence, he immediately determined to despatch Mustafa on that service. This would also give him an opportunity of getting letters of credit on some Armenian merchants of Tiflis, and thus he would be set up in that most necessary of all commodities to a traveller, a well-filled purse. The camp was to remain stationary for a fortnight, and by that time he hoped Mustafa would have returned.

All this being duly settled, Mustafa departed. In the mean while, the whole camp rang with the story which had been related both by Osmond and Ivanovitch. Osmond was looked upon as a wonder; he became the idol of the young men, who, envious of his adventures, would willingly have encountered the dangers to which he had been exposed, to become, like him, an object of so much interest. The women also excited the greatest curiosity. Their tent was constantly surrounded by those

who were anxious to steal a view of them ; and indeed they were not disappointed, as far as regarded Zabetta, for her head was completely turned by all she saw, and she willingly dispensed with her veil whenever a scrutiny of her face and person was desired.

The constant passage of brilliantly-dressed and plumed cavaliers ; their handsome persons well padded in front, tightly compressed in the waist ; their military bearing, and, more than all, their peering looks, had apparently drawn off her mind from her schemes of ambition at Constantinople ; and she began to consider whether it would not be the most advisable thing she could do to take up her future abode where she was. She heard of a chapel which was erected in the skirts of the camp, in which the service of the Greek church was performed ; and immediately settled that this was the most fitting opportunity for her to return to her original faith, and without further ceremony she went to church.

Ayesha had been dazzled at first by the novelty of the scene, and, for a few days, did not cease gazing with the greatest attention at every thing she saw. But she was still a Turkish girl, and therefore kept herself carefully secluded from the looks of men. She never stirred from the tent, for her whole and entire being was wrapped up in Osmond. He never passed a day without conversing with her; and, as her mind expanded under his direction, she daily made more progress in securing his esteem and admiration.

It was the current report throughout the camp that the doom of Cara Bey had been fixed, and that he was condemned to suffer death. The Russians had so many just complaints against him, of the cruel manner in which he had frequently put to death the prisoners he had taken from them, and of the wanton attacks which he had made upon their military stations, that, as a terror to others, it was determined that he should be executed in the

most public manner. This the commander-in-chief communicated to Osmond, who was too sensible of the justice of the sentence to oppose it. It had also been communicated to the offender himself, who received the information with more firmness than could have been expected from one who had shown himself so abject and pusillanimous in his conduct to Osmond. He said, he had but one favour to ask before he met his fate, which was, that he might have an interview with Zabetta without witnesses, which appeared so harmless a request that it was immediately granted.

When his request was made known to her, she shrank from it, and willingly would have avoided him; but when she recollected certain confidential conversations which they had had together, in which he had developed certain schemes for pushing their mutual fortunes in the world, and to which she had agreed, she determined to accede to his wishes, lest, ere he died, he might betray her views and blast her future prospects.

She found him alone in the corner of a small tent, with his hands and feet secured by irons, looking the picture of woe and wickedness. As soon as she appeared, his countenance brightened up; and throwing off as much of the demon as he could, he laid himself out to the best of his power to make himself agreeable to her.

“You are welcome,” said he. “You, Mashallah! are one of those whose conduct does not consist in mere words. You are a woman of whom there are few such in the world. You come to a fallen man when he can give you nothing in return. May Heaven reward you!”

“What words are these, Cara Bey?” exclaimed Zabetta. “May you live long!—this misery may pass. What would you have of me?”

“What say you? May I live long!—I might perhaps still live if you would help me; but, if you too condemn me, I die as sure as the sun will set to-night.”

“ I help you !” exclaimed Zabetta in astonishment. “ What can a poor weak woman like me do ?”

“ You can do much,” retorted the artful man. “ You have power over your daughter. She has power over the Frank, Osmond. He can demand my life from the Muscovite dogs. Have you understood me ?”

Zabetta paused to consider what course she ought to pursue, and what answer to give ; for with his ruin had fallen whatever scheme she might have planned in conjunction with him, and she dreaded to be farther implicated ; but he, full of wile and cunning, reading her thoughts, said—

“ Are you fool enough so easily to throw away the advantages which you possess, and which would raise you above all the women of Asia ? You have wealth, honours, and power held out to you, and straight you go and seat yourself on a dunghill, and turn your back upon them.”

“What say you?” said the excited woman.
 “I do not understand you.”

“You would easily understand me,” answered Cara Bey, “if, when I had got to Constantinople, I came to you and said: ‘Zabetta Kadûn, here is the kishlar aga of the Sultan coming to wait upon you; he comes to kiss your feet on the part of his highness; he invites you and your fair daughter to the seraglio: you will be its mistress: your words shall be a law: the treasures of the empire are open to you: the mother of the favourite Sultana is only second to the Sultan.’ You would understand me then, as you understand me now. Is it not so? Speak.”

“I do understand,” said Zabetta; “but these are mere words. Who is to ensure me this happiness, this power, and these riches?”

“Who?” said Cara Bey. “Not the Englishman, surely, in whose hands you have fallen; but I. Secure me from death, and I will ensure all this for you. I have more

friends at the Imperial gate than you can possibly know. I have a direct channel to the ear of the Emperor, which has never failed me yet; and, when a beautiful maid is in the wind, it never fails to lead to all which I now promise you."

"What am I to do? How am I to act?" said Zabetta, dazzled by the prospects held out, and ever ready to put her hand to an intrigue.

"Listen!" said the Bey. "You must make Ayesha work upon the feelings of the Frank. He is a good man—an upright man: there is no denying that. He has already told me that he does not wish my death. Who placed me and my castle in the hands of these Russian dogs? he, and he alone. They cannot refuse to set me free, if he insists upon it."

"And suppose they do," answered Zabetta, "how will you ever get to Constantinople, destitute and a castaway as you will be?"

"Leave that to me. There is no path, no hole, and nothing stirs in this country that is

unknown to me. Accompany the Frank : appear to put your full trust in him. Make him the slave of your daughter, and all will go well. And here," he continued, taking a ring off his finger, " return to her this ring which I took from her. Tell her it is the last present which a dying man makes her : it will soften her heart towards me. She cannot withstand that and your entreaties combined. Say you will help me."

Zabetta sat in silence for some time. She saw in truth how brilliant were the prospects held out to her by Cara Bey, when compared to those which any connexion with Osmond might promise. She allowed herself to be persuaded, and at length said : " I will do my best endeavours. I am but a woman ; still I will try. Osmond, I know, is a good man, and I can depend upon Ayesha ; but we are in the hands of hard-hearted men."

" You promise, then, to try," said Cara Bey.
 " Go your way, and depend upon success."

“ May Heaven protect you !” said Zabetta, and took her leave. She went her way, absorbed in thought. The words of the tempter had made a deep impression : she determined to do her utmost to save him ; and when she appeared before Ayesha, she studiously put on a look of care and grief.

“ What has happened ?” said Ayesha ; “ surely some misfortune is about to take place ! What has the vile man” (for she knew that she had been to see Cara Bey) “ said to make you unhappy ?”

“ Ah, my daughter !” exclaimed Zabetta, “ may you never pass such an hour as I have passed ! The wretch has been condemned to death, and he knows it. Never have I seen such profound sorrow, such sincere repentance as his ! Ah ! could we but save his life ! Indeed, it is cruel to see a fellow-creature die !”

This language, Zabetta was aware, would touch her daughter in the most tender point ; for her heart was ever ready to sympathise

with sorrow ; and although she knew that of all men who might be doomed to die, Cara Bey would excite the least of that sympathy, still she also knew that, if properly affected, Ayesha would not refuse her endeavours to save even his life.

“ What would Osmond say if we were to attempt to save him ? ” said Ayesha ; “ does he not think him worthy of death ! ”

“ He would not, and does not require his death,” said Zabetta in exultation ; “ he told Cara Bey so himself.”

“ Ah ! were I certain of that,” exclaimed Ayesha, “ I would entreat our kind protector and friend to exert his influence to save him. But can such a wretch be ever permitted to live ? ”

“ Cara Bey has lost all hope himself,” said Zabetta sorrowfully ; “ see, he has sent you this ! — of this, he says, he unjustly robbed you.” Upon saying which she gave her the ring.

Ayesha bounded forward upon regaining possession of this object so precious to her,

and exclaimed, "Praises to Allah for this ! He deserves to live, were it only for this act. I should never have thought the wretch capable of such generosity. We must try to save his life, in order that he may have time to repent of his iniquities, ere God requires it from him."

Zabetta was charmed to find how well the plot had hitherto worked. The more she pondered over his words, the more she saw how truly they might come to pass ; and her next step was, when Osmond visited her tent again, to soften his heart, and, united with Ayesha, to make him promise to exert his best endeavours to save the life of Cara Bey.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.



223-314



L 005 277 940 2

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 381 103 1

